





WILLIAM THE SILENT



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WILLIAM THE SILENT

FROM A PORTRAIT BY MIEREVELT IN THE MAURITSHUIS

WILLIAM THE SILENT

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PREFACE

THE story of William the Silent is in large measure the story of the Netherlands revolt, which has indissoluble links with the tale of events in several European countries, and he who writes the Prince's biography is subject therefore as he goes to a constant temptation to cover a wider and wider field. But as far as one could without presenting a picture too sectional or distorted I have kept within the narrow limits of a "Life".

I have consulted all the relevant contemporary writings within my reach. It were unnecessary to catalogue them; but I may mention specifically the later volumes of the Calendars of State Papers which have appeared since my most recent predecessors wrote, and the English narratives of Sir Roger Williams and T. Churchyard, these latter not so much for their intrinsic importance (though Williams at least is as judicial and free from bias as any chronicler of his time) as because previous writers on this subject do not seem to have made use of them. Of the many modern authorities special reference must be made to Miss Ruth Putnam whose "William the Silent" is a monument of enthusiastic industry. Mr. Frederick Harrison's luminous study in the "English Statesmen" series and M. Juste's biography have also been valuable helps. One need scarcely mention Motley; every future historian of the

struggle in the low countries is bound to be to some extent a parasite on the great American.

The path I have trodden has been traversed so often and so often that it were strange but that my foot sometimes have fitted exactly into some predecessor's footprints. Inevitable plagiarism needs no apology. The comparative paucity of references is deliberate. Passages quoted from foreign authors have in every instance been newly translated, saving only such as are taken from the Calendars of State Papers, Spanish and Venetian. I have dealt most fully with the middle period of William's life; one reason being that I find it more interesting.

J. C. S.

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WILLIAM THE SILENT

CHAPTER I

BIRTH AND BOYHOOD

THE ruined castle of Dillenburg, in Nassau, stands on a gigantic mound above the Dill, a tributary of the Lahn which, in its turn, joins the Rhine a few miles above Coblentz. The river winds half round the rock and under its shadow lies a quiet little town of a few thousand inhabitants—unpretentious churches, unpretentious schools, little narrow streets of archaic houses. For leagues in every direction the country is gently undulated, well sprinkled with trees, fertile of corn and vine. In village and champaign there has been little alteration since the sixteenth century ; but the castle, now no more than a few gaunt walls, blackened and cicatriced by fire and siege, was, four hundred years ago, one of the stateliest and least pregnable in Germany. Built about 1250 by Henry, grandson of Rupert of Nassau, and a man with an eye for a military position, it became the hereditary head-quarters of the younger of the two great Nassau lines. The family was sufficiently fashionable to be turbulent, and its stronghold saw numberless attacks. But it resisted them all successfully ; and gradually houses began to cluster around its foot, a small wooden brood under a colossal stone bird. Before the fifteenth century was out, the town had achieved importance enough to be granted city privileges ; and the establishment of a

law-court under the jurisdiction of John II (of the Helmet) increased the prestige of both castle and occupants. That Prince's great-nephew (John V) supplemented the law-court with a church and a school, set up more courts in other parts of the county and started a mining industry. By the middle of the sixteenth century Dillenburg was, as small German cities of those days went, a place of note and wealth, and its castle one of the most celebrated baronial homes in the empire.

There, on 25 April, 1533, Juliana of Stolberg bore to her husband, William the Rich of Nassau, a son William who was destined to shed on the Nassau name a brighter and more permanent glory than any it had hitherto acquired. Yet already the family history was no undistinguished one. The Nassaus had played an important part in the history of the Empire and of Europe. Historians with axes to grind traced their origin (enviable or otherwise) to one of Cæsar's officers, to an uncle of the Emperor Severus, or to Nasua, a Suevian mentioned by the Roman general in his "Gallic War". Be these pedigrees¹ accurate or not it is at least certain that the feudal chiefs of the Lahn valley, first Counts of Lam-bourg, then of Nassau, grew in power and influence from the eleventh century onward until, in the thirteenth, their House supplied in the person of Adolf a successful candidate for the Imperial throne. To the aspiring mediaeval noble every neighbouring province was, first and foremost, a potential dowry; and count after count of Nassau made marriage a means to territorial profit. Otto II—from whom William the Silent was seventh in descent—married the heiress of Vianden. Engelbert I, who flourished during the reign of our Henry IV,

¹ Gibbon, "Decline and Fall," chap. II. "The family of Herod, at least after it had been favoured by fortune, was lineally descended from Cimon and Miltiades, Theseus and Cecrops, Aeacus and Jupiter."

married Joanna of Leck, and thus acquired great estates in the Low Countries. Engelbert II, the real victor of Guinegates, and the close companion and friend of Charles the Bold and afterwards of Maximilian, was thus one of the richest magnates of the Burgundian Court. By his military and diplomatic triumphs he gave the name of Nassau a European reputation. Dying without sons he left his estates to the children of his brother John who had married the heiress of Hesse-Catzenellenbogen. According to family tradition, the Netherland possessions went to Henry, the elder son, a worldly, unscrupulous man, famous for having secured Charles V the imperial Crown, whilst those in Germany devolved upon William, known to history as William the Rich.

The richness of William the Rich was of the same quality as William the Silent's silence. The father was unusually opulent in but one respect; the son was conspicuously speechless upon a single occasion. The Count, in Motley's words, "was only rich in children," of which treasures he had fourteen. True, the Dillenburg estates contained vineyards and spas. But neither alcoholic nor non-alcoholic beverages produced a revenue sufficient to keep the elder William from continuous pecuniary embarrassment. Fortunately he was a man of simple tastes and small ambitions, and the load of poverty bore more lightly on him than on another. Yet he was no nonentity; as Groen van Prinsterer says: "*avoir été le père du Prince d'Orange n'est pas son titre unique au souvenir de la postérité*". When, all around him, Catholic and Protestant Princes were at each other's throats, when his own belongings were constantly threatened by creditors and relatives, he contrived for nearly a century, though he joined for a while the Smalcaldian league, not only to retain his grasp upon his inheritance but to remain at peace with his neighbours. Even the Hesses, whom

he hated, he only attacked in the law-courts ; a suit with them regarding certain lands constituting his chief diversion for the greater part of his life. His country was a little oasis of quiet amid an empire swept by hot and roaring storms ; and his subjects were grateful for it. In religion as in politics—the two spheres were, it is understood, almost coincident in his day—he steered a sane and temperate course. Broad of mind, he came gradually over to the Lutheran doctrines and instructed his simple subjects in them. His faith meant something ; he refused the Golden Fleece rather than take the Catholic oath ; but neither as Catholic nor as Protestant did he use his power to inflict anything that can reasonably be called persecution.

Probably much of his wisdom was reflected from his wife. Juliana of Nassau, although not gifted with any exceptional intellectual powers, was a remarkable woman. In 1521, at the age of fifteen, she married William's ward, Count Philip of Hainault. Philip died in 1529 and the widow wedded the guardian. From girlhood she had shown a more than common strength of conviction and vigour of character. Her Protestantism was fervent, her Christianity more fervent still. Those of her letters which remain to us speak a passionate love for husband and children, a fortitude unsurpassed even by that of her iron son, and a profound trust in the purposes of a Providence which showered upon her loneliness and terrible griefs. After her husband's death, her existence was, to judge by things exterior, one of unrelieved misery. Son after son died in battle for the faith that was theirs and hers. But Juliana's spirit was indomitable, she never lost her calm or self-control, and the nascent Dutch Republic itself owed a debt to the mother who from her German home gave its founder consolation in sorrow and hope in depression. If William inherited or caught

his mildness and tolerance from his father it is to his mother's blood, training and example that we may, if we will, trace his spirituality and his unconquerable courage.

The eleven years which followed 1533 were strenuous years for Western Europe. They saw what had at first been a bridgeable cleft in the Catholic Church broaden and deepen until nothing less miraculous than a miracle could have brought the two faces of the gulf together again. In 1534 the young Calvin published the first edition of his "Institutes," and the Anabaptists at Münster enjoyed their brief triumph, preaching doctrines and obeying a code more startlingly heretical than any which had yet shocked the orthodox world. Next year one of the two great weapons of the Counter-Reformation was forged when Ignatius Loyala and his little cluster of comrades formed the Society of Jesus; and, before the short period was out, the seal of pontifical approval had been given to that other great instrument against heresy, the Inquisition. Charles the Fifth was striving to scour the Mediterranean of Barbarossa and his corsairs, waging, with Henry VIII as his ally, his long and futile struggle with Francis I, and endeavouring vainly, his vision of universal empire before him, to bring the German Protestants back to the fold without having recourse to the arms which would engender permanent bitterness and create divisions perhaps unhealable.

But life at Dillenburg was very quiet. Now and then a princely train passed through Nassau's territory and was entertained in princely style. The castle could house a thousand guests: William never allowed poverty to limit hospitality and Juliana was renowned as a hostess. In the main, though, the place was more of a home than a Court. Almost every year a child was born. John—William's lifelong friend—came in 1536, Louis—afterwards to dazzle Europe with his chivalrousness—

in 1537. Later there were two more sons, Adolphus and Henry, and nine daughters. The elder children were all small together, and, although William was to leave Dillenburg young, links were riveted between them in these early days which no subsequent strain could sever. Juliana educated them herself, teaching them the German language—as far as we know the only one she knew—and soaking them through and through with the religion which was a part of her being. Like Cromwell, she walked with God daily; it is doubtful whether any, even among the earlier Protestants, could have had a more intimate sense of the Deity's personality and proximity, and she never took a step or watched one of her sons take one without first having sought (so to phrase it) advice and sustenance from Providence. Under this ineffaceable influence, amid the tranquil surroundings of his birthplace, seeing few persons of his own rank save his family, the magnates who from time to time lodged in the castle and a few stolid young scions of the neighbouring nobility who had been sent to Dillenburg to share in his education, the Nassau heir lived for eleven years. Then a thing happened which snatched him from this secluded domesticity and thrust him into the splendour and unrest of the most brilliant Court in Europe, an event without the intervention of which his whole life would probably have flowed along very different channels. In July, 1544, William's cousin René of Orange, was killed at St. Dizier; bequeathing all his possessions to the boy. This René, son of William's Uncle Henry, had inherited not only his father's great Netherland estates, but the Principality of Orange in Avignon, which had belonged to his mother's brother, Philibert. Orange, although only sixty square miles in area and inhabited by a few thousand peasants and small tradesmen, was, nominally, a free sovereignty held, not

from Emperor or King, but direct from God. Hence it was that although William never visited Orange or even (what he might have deemed adequate equivalent) derived any income from it, he, like his predecessor, used the Orange title in preference to those, attractive enough in other respects, of Catzenellenbogen, Vianden, Dietz, Tonnerre, Ponthièvre, Charnay, Breda, Diest, Warneton, Arlay, Roseroy and Chastelbelin.¹ In assenting to the testament² under which René had left honours and riches to the young German cousin, Charles V stipulated that William should be brought to Brussels and educated under his own eye—naturally feeling a desire that a child who was to be one of his most powerful subjects should be trained in the way he should go. There were objections to this proposal from the parents' point of view. Juliana was naturally unwilling to part with her first-born, and both she and her husband knew that a Brussels education would mean a Catholic education. But Protestants at that date had still hopes, albeit vain, of a *rapprochement* with Rome. This being so, and William the Rich and his wife not lacking worldly wisdom because they were replete with heavenly, the agreement was made. Father and mother are reported to have been partly consoled by a rumour that Mary of Hungary, Regent of the Netherlands, was inclining towards the reformed religion. They let the boy go; the elder William took the younger to Brussels and, after seeing the legal forms of succession through, left him under Mary's charge and turned again home.

Brussels, the great walled capital of Brabant, was at that time already, in population and importance, a rival

¹ He took also the Nassau-Chalons arms and the motto, "Je maintiendrai". Later he used the personal motto, "Saevis tranquillus in undis"—"Calm amid the fierce waves".

² Broadmindedly enough; President Schoore argued in council that the son of a heretic ought not to succeed.

of Ghent, Bruges and Antwerp. Its inhabitants numbered a hundred thousand, its industrial guilds were fifty-two, and its palaces, churches and religious houses could be counted by the score. The activities of the city were enormous, its citizens alert, hardworking and noisy, its nobles addicted to flamingly luxurious banquets, tournaments and shows. For eight years young William of Orange lived here. Nominally he was Mary's page, but Charles the Fifth taking a liking to him, he soon became the constant companion and attendant of the Emperor. At table, in Charles's private apartment, in the council chamber and at great functions of state, the curly-haired brown-eyed page was always to be seen at his master's elbow. The experience was invaluable. While his character was still plastic, his mind adolescently swift to receive impressions, he saw the whole machinery of government and of diplomacy from the inside. The pageants, shows, trappings, all the things which aim (and succeed in their aim) at making courts, monarchs and councils "larger than human" to plebeian eyes, were for him thus early stripped of all power to delude. He heard the petty recriminations and complainings, watched the commonplace intrigues, and was the object of the quite ordinary loves and hates of men who, to the general public, were not men but demi-gods. He learnt (and never forgot) that he who would understand affairs must understand human beings. His tact, courtesy, and influence over people whom, in his heart, he really despised, were not the least of the factors which contributed towards his success in later days, and their origin can, in part at all events, be traced to the social education he received at the Court of Charles the Fifth.

Social education was not the only sort of education bestowed on him. Charles was considerably more atten-

tive to the intellectual welfare of his page than to that of his heir. He appointed as the boy's tutor Jerome Perrenot, brother to that Bishop of Arras who was afterwards to engrave his name upon the tablets of history as Cardinal Granvelle. Perrenot was an assiduous master. Religion and statecraft excepted, languages formed at that time the only important study of well-born youth. So well did Perrenot do his work that before William reached manhood he could, beyond his native German, speak and write with consummate ease Flemish, the tongue of his adopted country, Spanish which was that of his masters, French that of his neighbours, and Latin which was the Volapuk of cultured Europe. Catholicism the young Prince imbibed in the ordinary way from his surroundings, but there is no reason to believe that he was given a training in controversial theology. It is probable indeed that in these callow days neither his own soul nor the universe interested him to any great extent. Even when he became a man of intense spirituality, when daily communion with the Eternal came to be his armour against the slings and arrows of Fortune, his actions were dictated more by political (in the broadest sense) considerations than by theological ones. Neither as Catholic, as Lutheran nor as Calvinist did religion mean to him what it meant to Philip II, to William of Hesse or to St. Aldegonde. At seventeen, sunned by the Imperial smile, receiving deference from all around him, meditating on the vast possibilities of his personal future, the question of the relative merits of the old and new dogmas disturbed him but little.

Of the incidents of his life between the ages of eleven and eighteen we know practically nothing. Could his letters to Dillenburg be found much light might be thrown upon that period. But time has eaten the whole of his correspondence with the exception of a polite and

prosaic little letter written to Granvelle in 1550, the year which saw the issue of an edict of which more will be said later. This "veiled period," however, ended in 1551, and, subsequent to that year, the supply of documents of all kinds relating to him is amply abundant.

In July, 1551, being eighteen years old, William married, or rather was married to (for his own inclinations were of small account in the matter) Anne of Egmont, only child and heiress of Maximilian, Count of Buren, an old general and servant of the Emperor. The match was purely an arrangement between Charles and the bride's father. The latter, having been offered a dukedom, asked to have, instead, William of Orange as a son-in-law. Charles at first had fears lest the marriage should make Orange too powerful, but the Bishop of Arras quashed these scruples. There was no question of demur on the part of either of the two persons who, to the unsophisticated modern mind, would seem to be most nearly concerned. As things turned out the union proved as satisfactory as most. Anne was intelligent, sympathetic, good-tempered, and as old as her husband, and the letters which passed between them indicate that the *mariage de convenance* developed into a marriage of affection. Two children—Philip and Mary, of course—were born of the union. It only lasted six years, during the greater part of which husband and wife were separated by war. But had not Anne been torn away by an untimely death, William would in all likelihood never have been harried by domestic troubles during the most anxious portion of his political career. Immediately after the wedding the Prince and Princess entered into occupation of the magnificent Nassau palace at Brussels built (grievous to tell) by Engelbert with money extorted from the wretched merchants of Bruges. They entertained there on a lavish scale, keeping open

house to all comers. Anne's large dowry apart, William was exceedingly rich, but, coming as he did of a stock which was always extravagant in youth, he contrived to make his expenditure considerably exceed his income.¹ The careless clean-featured young man, proud yet merry and courteous and free of speech and gesture, lived royally, dressed magnificently and rode through Brussels streets with a crowd of gentlemen-attendants, jostled and hunted in state. For years he kept a whole regiment of falconers, and his kitchen was the school for a continent's cooks. Later, debt forced him to retrench, but during Anne's lifetime the Nassau palace excelled in hospitality that of the monarch himself.

William, however, was for the while destined to see little of the palace. Nine month of banquets and levees . . . and he found himself in camp. After a year or two of cautious negotiations the German Princes under Maurice of Saxony's leadership had formed with Henry II of France an alliance against the Emperor, the grievance of the former being Charles's continual encroachments upon their religious and political liberties, and the object of the latter the humbling of an all-powerful rival and the "rectification" of the Franco-Netherlandish frontier. The Emperor was at Innsbruck when news of the rebellion reached him, and the task of meeting Henry's attack upon the frontier devolved upon the Regent Mary. Always energetic, she took prompt steps to organize the Netherland forces and to defend the principal strategic points. William of Orange, who had been captain of foot since his marriage, was amongst the nobles selected for command.

¹ In 1555 he was 800,000 florins in debt ; in 1563 900,000 florins.

CHAPTER II

ACTIVE SERVICE

ORANGE (now colonel of ten foot companies) raised a force in Holland and, in May, 1552, proceeded to Thorn, on the Lower Meuse, to raise another. His work was somewhat dull. At the outset Henry had invaded Luxembourg, Rochemar, Yvoy, Damvilliers and Montvédy falling before him with little resistance ; but now he had temporarily abandoned his attack upon the Netherlands for a campaign in Alsace and Lorraine. Whilst the chagrined Emperor was planning the recovery of Metz—which like Strasburg, Toul and Verdun, had fallen to the French—his young lieutenant was moving from place to place along the frontier, endeavouring to satisfy small bands of unpaid, cold and hungry mercenaries with Government promises to pay. His reports¹ to head-quarters were full and painstaking to a degree—Pepys himself would have approved of them—but he got little enjoyment out of his first slice of active service. It lacked “incident”. “My wife,” he wrote from Thorn on 10 June, “please ask our lady mother and our lady grandmother to forgive me for not writing to them, but the only reason of it is that I have no news,” and this secular plea of no news occurs more than once in the correspondence with Anne. His delicately nurtured body must have taken some time to get accustomed to the discomforts of the field. “I

¹ Dozens of these, addressed to Queen Mary, are among the voluminous correspondence disinterred by M. Gachard.

must stop now," runs another letter to his wife, "for it is nearly twelve o'clock and we have had scarcely any sleep for three days, and to-morrow we must be up at dawn"; and later he complained of the coldness of sleeping in tents. Separation from Anne, too, seems to have been as little to his liking as it was to hers, and week after week he expressed his desire to be with her and begged her not to let her loneliness depress her.

For five months he was busied in this unpleasant and inglorious parody of warfare. All this time the Emperor had been occupied in Germany. Negotiations with—that is to say bribes and concessions to—the German nobles resulted at last in the Peace of Passau, signed on 21 August. Maurice and his friends nonchalantly threw over their French ally and Charles was at liberty to concentrate his forces upon Metz. William asked to be sent thither with the reinforcements which the Regent Mary was despatching from the Low Countries; but the favour was refused and in October he was ordered to join the army which was invading Artois. Amongst his fellow-commanders were the proud and stupid Aerschot, afterwards one of his most prominent enemies, Hoogstraten, young, reckless and, later, one of the most courageous supporters of reform, and Brederode, father of that Henry de Brederode whose absurd exploits during the struggle against Spain were to be a fruitful source of embarrassment to William and his party. Battles were as rare in this campaign as florins from Brussels, but thousands of men died from fever, and in November, 1552, William, then at Arras, informed his wife that disbandment was imminent. "I cannot tell you how I long to see you. It seems as though I were a year behind you."

Conjugal yearnings did not prevent him from delaying his return. He went to Thionville where the Emperor

was, in order, if possible, to induce Charles to settle the interminable lawsuit with Landgrave Philip of Hesse who had been released from years of prison by the Peace of Passau. A few days afterwards, however, the hopeless siege of Metz was raised and the Prince struggled home to Brussels over the frozen roads with the embittered Emperor and his beaten army.

During the winter Charles recoiled for another spring. Orange and his fellow grandees laboured in their duchies and counties, extracting money and men from the burghers and peasants who had no quarrel whatever with the French, and not unnaturally tended to be close-fisted when asked to spend their florins in order to help on their own ruin. Holland, for instance, had to furnish 300,000 guilders, and its loyalty doubtless diminished in value by that amount. In the early months of 1553 the forces thus procured were set in motion under Emanuel Philibert, the attractive, unscrupulous, strong-headed, iron-hearted exile of Savoy. Orange received a subordinate command and saw war at its worst. Artois and Picardy, cockpits for a thousand years, were devastated by both armies as never before or since. Th rouanne was beleaguered, stormed, sacked with torture and rape, and, with sixteenth century thoroughness, levelled to the ground. Hesdin met an almost identical fate. All the lures of the French failed to tempt Emanuel to a pitched battle, and when, in October, the usual hibernation commenced, Metz had been more than avenged.

For Orange who wintered at Breda with Anne (who had been quartered there as his vicereine) there was another struggle to get money and more levying of mercenaries. In May of 1554 he went to Brussels in order to help the Regent improve the laws of Antwerp, in which regard at the age of twenty-one he could

scarcely have been an expert. That month saw him at the head of a cavalry division with his father-in-law as one of his brigadiers. There were smart actions around Namur (in which he failed to distinguished himself) but the big battle again avoided being fought, although the two armies sat and glared at each other for a whole week. The Emperor having come to his general's assistance, the French somewhat unaccountably—they greatly outnumbered their opponents—retired. Charles followed them, ravaged Picardy according to the etiquette of the time, and once more returned to Brussels.

Thus ended 1554. The three years had given William of Orange valuable experience. His early training had sharpened his capacities for dealing with individuals—for diplomacy, in short—and the quarrel of Emperor and King had afforded him his chance of learning how to manage men in the mass. He had found his feet as a civil and military organizer and administrator. In the twelvemonth that followed it became apparent that his abilities had not been entirely hidden by the bushel of his modesty. He was given an opportunity of exercising them in a sphere more important than any which he had hitherto occupied; 1555, in fact, is one of the crucial years of his career.

The winter months he spent partly in Brussels, partly in the provinces, hiring food for powder. Apparently this last occupation bored him. "I am so sorrowful at having lost your company," Anne read, "that I know not well how to write, for it reminds me of what I feel all day long." There were compensations for these psychological complications, for in July he was made generalissimo of the 20,000 troops stationed round Givet. Other men, older men, Buren and Bossu, Lalaing, Aremberg, Meghem and Egmont coveted the position, but Charles put his protégé over all their heads,

not, it may be believed, for mere reasons of personal preference. Badoer, the Venetian ambassador, informed his employers that William from diffidence refused the post twice when offered it by Mary and the Bishop of Arras. "He is without knowledge or experience of military matters, neither is he supposed by nature to be inclined towards them, but the Emperor has given him this charge to rid himself of the competition of those who aspired to it, and of the confusion which had arisen in the camp, the Prince of Orange on many accounts being his chief vassal in the provinces."

An exhausting and uninteresting task lay before the new general-in-chief. The French had been making irritating raids across the border; with the soldiery discontented and dying wholesale (he informed Queen Mary) "*plus par misère et faute de vivre que pour autre maladie,*" plague rampant, rain continuous and money absent, the counter-invasion urged by hotheads would have been insane. Defensive measures alone could be taken with safety and this work William did admirably. He built "under the beards" of Nevers and the Admiral Coligny, a chain of forts, including Philippeville and Charlemont, to protect Hainault. Although, as he complained to his wife, rambling about earthworks in the rain depressed him greatly, his concentration upon the labour was unremitting. He held his ill-assorted horde of hirelings together as few men so young could have done, and he explained his every step to the exacting Regent at Brussels with a thoroughness and lucidity rarely equalled in military dispatches.

In October he had a short holiday, for the long preparations for Charles's renunciation of his Netherland sovereignty had been completed, and the Emperor, in part no doubt from a real liking for Orange, but in part also because he wished to ensure for his son the support

of a man prospectively so powerful, insisted that the young general should leave camp for Brussels in order to be present at the ceremony. Many descriptions have been written of the proceedings in the great hall of the ducal palace. The building was crowded with Princes and lords, knights and ladies, ecclesiastics and councillors. The gouty, dyspeptic, bent, hang-lipped, scraggy-bearded, old, middle-aged Emperor, faced the assembly leaning for support upon the shoulder of William of Orange. After divers formalities had been gone through, the Emperor recounted his manifold toils (somewhat in the manner of the Apostle in the Epistle) and commended his heir to the audience. If the entertaining of vast dreams, however unrealizable, and the display of enormous energy, however misdirected, testify to a great man, Charles had been a great man; if not, he had merely been a great nuisance. But as concerning his relations with the Flemings and Dutch—and Orange—they had been far more amicable than any which his son could ever hope to establish. Charles had at least a gross bonhomie; he was a Netherlander born, and spoke Flemish. Philip, cold, inordinately proud, sullen-faced and suspicious, was already a bigot of bigots, a Spaniard of Spaniards: to Orange and his countrymen a foreigner of foreigners. The change of rulers boded ill.

For a while it made no apparent difference. The day after the Brussels tableau Orange returned to his mercenaries and his mud. The silk and wool Mary had sent the troops instead of corn had not placated them. "Sire," ran an appeal the King received in November, "I am daily more troubled by the robberies and deeds of violence that the men both horse and foot commit in the plains for lack (so they say) of payment, for they have nothing wherewith to buy food; and I

humbly beg your Majesty to send the money you mentioned when you last wrote." Philip, writing interminable screeds, promised him the money, but did not forward it, giving him a sop in the shape of a councillorship-of-state, which might have been better appreciated had it come at a more opportune moment. At the close of the year (1555) things at camp were in a deplorable state. "Our camp," he laments to his wife, "is piteously miserable, for we are here without a farthing, and the soldiers are dying of hunger and cold; but they remember us no more at Court than if we were all dead." When, early in 1556, Philip did make a suggestion, it was merely that the army should live upon the peasantry. This they were in part doing, and the villagers were on the verge of revolt. Fortunately the tension was relieved almost immediately after by the treaty of Vaucelles, whereby Henry and Philip swore (the former at least with conscious hypocrisy) to observe an armistice of five years' duration, applying to the whole of their respective dominions. Orange was at last at liberty to discharge his army of malcontents. On 20 January he went to Antwerp and was elected a Knight of the Golden Fleece. The rest of the year was taken up with endeavours to obtain from his Governments the heavy grants which a cowed states-general had been coerced into offering.

The truce did not last. The embers of enmity smouldered, and the "venerable viceregent of Christ," who "stood beside them with the fan in his hand," speedily revived the flame. In January, 1557, Henry, instigated by the Pope, who found the Spaniards in South Italy unpleasantly powerful neighbours, attacked Italy, and Philip was forced to renew preparations for war. The scattered mercenaries were collected. Philip himself went to England, and the reluctant subjects of

the wife he treated so cruelly gave him a subsidy and 8000 horses and foot, picked men, under Clinton and Pembroke. Orange, in the spring, was busy with army organization and minor diplomatic *pourparlers* with the Rhenish Archbishops. Later he visited Breda to see his wife, and Frankfort to renew acquaintance with his father and his father's lawsuit. In July, he repaired to Givet with his young brother Louis, and assumed a command in the army which was about to invade Picardy. In the battle and siege of St. Quentin, which took place in the following month, he did, as far as is apparent, nothing notable. Then, as ever, perhaps, he found himself not made for the field. The records pass his name over. We hear much of the ill-fated Egmont and the fiery charge which gave him European renown and a swelled head, much of the ill-fated Coligny and his heroic defence, nothing of William of Orange whose fame was to outshine that of either. The victorious army, Orange with it, pressed on, taking Châtelet, Han, and Noyen. The Prince's mind does not seem to have been brooding on world-problems just then. All that he had to tell his wife about Han was that some of its defenders would be hanged for their effrontery in resisting the King's forces for so long, and that it would be an extremely agreeable situation for a country-house; all about the war in general that the French were in a pretty mess. As things happened the Spaniards also were in a pretty mess. Pay, in strict accordance with precedent, was conspicuous by its absence; the various nationalities in the army (English included) quarrelled and fought; and in October, 1557, the Prince, slightly enfeebled by fever, again found himself in the capital.

After several months at his old work of endeavouring to turn pence into pounds for a thankless master, he

was entrusted, in February, 1558, with one of the most important missions which had yet fallen to him. He was sent (at his own expense, be it understood) to Frankfort, formally to deliver the Imperial crown to Ferdinand of Austria, Charles the Fifth's brother. He assisted at the new Emperor's coronation and attempted on Philip's behalf to negotiate alliances with some of the German Princes. But in the second week of March, news of his wife's serious illness caused him to hurry home to Breda. Four days after he reached her, Anne of Egmont died. The marriage had been a happy one. William's letters to his wife in absence attest the warmth and unreticence of their relations. Thus runs one passage written from Escherenne in 1555:—

“My wife . . . as for what you say in your last letter, that you are troubled because I have not written you for so long, not knowing whether perchance I was angry with you, I should have thought that the love which is between us two had been great enough to drive all suspicions away, and that you would have known me to be too sensible to be angry for that reason . . . for, after God, I love you above all, and should be less happy than I am did I not know you to love me as well.”

Her letters to him—mostly addressed as they were to camp—have, very comprehensibly, not been preserved. But it is evident that she not merely loved but admired her husband, was of a disposition gentle to timidity, but withal sensible enough to be a good housewife, and, when occasion arose, firm and long-sighted enough to carry on William's local government with prudence and economy. To the Prince the blow was a severe one. He told Granvelle that it threw him into a fever and convulsions. But after the first shock had passed away his natural equality of temper soon asserted itself and,

although anxious as to the future of his young children, he bore the bereavement philosophically.

Philip, who wrote William two rather considerate letters of condolence, could not spare him for long. Early in May he resumed at Antwerp his old task of revising the local law, and in June he was hurried off to the relief of Thionville. Before he reached the town Guise took it; but the French success was short-lived. On 12 July Egmont—violating, complained the Duke of Alva, all the rules of scientific warfare—swept the flower of the French army off the field of Gravelines. Henry now became as anxious for peace as was parsimonious Philip, and negotiations were broached at Cercamp, the twenty-five year old Orange acting for the Spanish King in company with such experienced grey-beards as Alva, Ruy Gomez, Granvelle and that industrious and servile Dutchman, President Viglius.

For a time the complicated proposals and counter-proposals were interrupted by the death of Mary of England. Orange repaired to Brussels, where he was present at the elaborate funeral service ordered by the ostensibly grief-stricken husband. Charles V, too, had just gluttonized himself into the other world, and on 29 December a magnificent pageant to his memory was held in the cathedral. The Prince of Orange bore, during the service, the symbol of sovereignty, and, according to an Englishman present, stood by the hearse and delivered a proclamation: "He is ded . . . He shall remain ded . . . He is ded, and there is another risen up in hys place greater than ever he was," a funeral oration (drawn up presumably under Philip's supervision) which scarcely erred on the side of generosity to the "ded". In February, 1559, negotiations were resumed at Chateau Cambrésis, and on 3 April a treaty of peace was signed. The basis of it was the *status quo ante*

bellum; and as the French had won several hundred towns in Italy and the Low Countries, and a strip of Picardy was all that had been captured by the Spaniards, Philip (who, had Henry only known it, would have accepted peace at any price) got decidedly the best of the bargain. Elizabeth of England having refused to marry the detested widower of her detested sister for reasons both private and public, Philip agreed to honour as his third wife the French King's daughter, a gentle child who had previously been intended for his son Carlos. Exiled Emanuel Philibert of Savoy was given back his lands on condition that he led Henry's sister to the altar. There was a great burst of rejoicing in the Netherlands. The poor peace-loving citizens, whose interests and wishes never counted for anything, went wild with delight at their deliverance from war and the cost of war, lighting bonfires, playing masques, walking and dancing in processions, holding rustic sports and indulging in Gargantuan feasts. But the peace was not as yet properly cemented, and as securities for its proper execution the French King chose Orange, Alva, Aerschot and Egmont; and immediately the articles had been signed the four went to Henry's capital.

In Paris these prisoners-of-peace were detained for several months. The two Kings had concluded their war with each other in order to conduct a joint one against heretics. But each (not unreasonably) supposed the other to be slippery, and ratification took some time. How Orange, in particular, occupied himself during this period we have no means of gathering, as few letters survive; but he worked hard, and, doubtless, when not engaged with state affairs, found plenty of entertainment, as masques, balls, and hunting-parties were continually being arranged in celebration of the peace. Each of the only two anecdotes we have regarding the Prince's

sojourn in Paris represents him as returning from hunting with the King. The less fully authenticated of them testifies to his kindness and lack of absurd dignity. An enterprising Parisian had confessed to fishing through a window with a hook for the Prince of Orange's silver plate. What he had not caught he had damaged, and he was sentenced to death. Hearing of this as he was returning from the forest William got a reprieve from the King, spurred to the scaffold, gave the angler a little homily on morals and sent him away free amid applause. The silver was returned. The other story is more important, better-known and more certainly true. It gained universal currency during the Prince's lifetime, and is told—to mention but two excellent authorities—by the fervent Catholic historian Pontus Payen and by Orange himself in his "Apologie". In later years the Prince held that the incident in question was the turning-point of his life. It is possible that the course of his career may have tended to make him deceive himself regarding his own psychological history. But the tale has a consummate interest nevertheless.

There was a stag-hunt in the great wood of Vincennes, and, in the course of it, the French King and William of Orange found themselves alone together. Threading their way on horseback under the green branches along the forest paths they fell into intimate converse, and Henry became confidential. He and Philip had, at Alva's suggestion, secretly arranged, as Motley puts it, "to extirpate Protestantism by a general extirpation of "Protestants". Assuming that William must know of the plot and approve of it, he told him how he had set his heart upon an inquisition of unparalleled vigour and rigour, how every man, high or low, in the French and Spanish dominions, who was in the

slightest degree polluted with the new doctrine was to be murdered, and how the Spanish troops in the Netherlands would in future be employed in putting this atrocious scheme into action.

The young Orange had never before heard whisper of the plan. He was amazed and appalled. But not a betraying tremor passed over his face, not a compromising word escaped his mouth. If the eyelids contracted a little, if the expressive lips tightened, Henry saw nothing of it. His tongue ran on. He thought, no doubt, how pleasant it was to meet a rare and sympathetic spirit to whom he could open his heart and its fullness. But before the mind's eye of the Silent Prince—it was this incident that gave him his name, *le Taiseur*, *le Taciturne*—a whole world of terrible possibilities shuddered into brightness. When the pair rejoined their companions he saw his path plain before him, not perhaps in definition or in goal, but at least in general direction. He had taken things too easily, thinking little of politics, unconscious of the great issues which even now were taking shape around him, more of a courtier than anything else. Three years before the young Prince (according to F. Badoer, the Venetian) had said of the Brabant Estates which were refusing supplies to the Crown: "His Majesty ought to have all those hanged who dare go counter to him in his so important necessities". His natural instincts, however, were sound. Needless bloodshed and religious persecution were alike abhorrent to him, and he held dear the liberties of his country—and, it must be added, of himself and his order. The need for instant and bold action stood clearly revealed, and the keystone of the growing arch of tyranny was the horde of Spanish soldiery in the Netherlands. With those veterans gone the plans of Philip for wholesale massacre might be frustrated. A

week after the interview with Henry, William returned to Brussels determined, in his own words, "to drive this vermin from the land". He had entered on the course which was to lead him first to a long and wearisome constitutional resistance, then to war for his country's liberties, then to death in his prime by the hand of an assassin.

His loyalty to King and Church remained, judged by his intellectual standard of loyalty, unimpaired. He was ready to obey both as long as neither called upon him to violate laws, moral and other, which held a prior place in his respect. The right of the Netherlanders to liberty of conscience and the control of their own local affairs must be recognized and safeguarded by those who threatened completely to abrogate both. Home again, the young man began to gather around him kindred spirits from among the Flemish nobility, men of whom some were Protestant in tendency, some devout Catholics, men of many different stamps, but all chafing under the ever-increasing burden of the alien autocracy. Against Philip's will Orange got his friends Hoogstraten and Montigny elected to the Order of the Fleece. The Regency of the Netherlands being vacant he schemed (having, for obvious reasons, abandoned as soon as entertained the hope of getting it for himself) to secure the position for Christina of Lorraine¹ (niece of Charles V), whose youngest daughter, Dorothy, he proposed, should the scheme succeed, to marry. The crafty Bishop of Arras (Granvelle), though he had been for four years a friend and confidant of William's, warned Philip against this arrangement; the regency went to Margaret, Duchess of Parma, the virile but mercurial illegitimate daughter of the late Emperor, and Dorothy of Lorraine married Duke William of Bavaria. When

¹ Holbein's "Duchess of Milan".

the estates of the provinces met and Philip demanded three millions of florins from them, the King suspected Orange's influence at the back of their stipulation that redress should precede supply, that the ferocious Spanish regiments should be withdrawn before a stiver would be voted. Handed a petition in the name of the States, signed by Orange, Egmont and others, and detailing the misdeeds of the soldiery, his rage boiled over. "Am I also," he cried, "am I also as a Spaniard to quit the land?"

On 25 August, 1559, less than three weeks afterwards, Philip left the Netherlands for ever. As he was stepping on shipboard (so the story goes) with the brilliant crowd of nobles around him, the Prince of Orange, alert and courteous, came forward to bid him farewell. Suddenly the King turned on him and fiercely began to accuse him of having frustrated his plans. "What has been done for your Majesty," said Orange with quiet gravity, "has been done by the Estates." The sallow face was contorted, the thin hand leapt forward and clutched the young Netherlander by the wrist, "Not the estates,"¹ cried Philip hoarsely, "but you! you! you!"

¹ "No los estados ma vos, vos, vos!"—the use of the plural "you" to any one but a servant was in itself an insult.

CHAPTER III

THE NETHERLANDS AND THEIR RULERS.

THE seventeen provinces which are known to history as the Spanish Netherlands had been the heritage of Mary of Burgundy, last of that ducal Burgundian line which by fortunate marriages and successful wars had welded them together. Mary had married Maximilian of Austria and the provinces had thus devolved upon the Archduke Philip who became the husband of mad Joanna of Aragon and Castile and the father of Charles the Fifth. Dynastic arrangements made, as was the fashion of the time, without the least reference to the wishes or the interests of the inhabitants, transferred these territories from the Austrian connexion to the Spanish connexion; dynastic bonds had alone linked them to each other. Four distinct peoples—Dutch, Flemings, Walloons and Germans—went to make up their population. The northern provinces, Holland and Zeeland, Utrecht and Friesland, Guelderland, Overysse, Groningen, were bundled together by the tie of a common sovereignty with the quite French counties of Artois and Hainault and their cities of Arras and Valenciennes, with Flanders and Brabant, Namur and Mechlin, and with outlying Luxemburg, spreading away to the south-east, separated from the other provinces by the long strip of the prince-bishopric of Liège. Broadly speaking these seventeen counties and duchies fell into two groups. There were the Northern, the Dutch, ultimately the Protestant, provinces which lived

mainly on agriculture and fishing, and the coasts of which were perpetually at struggle with the beleaguering sea. Of these Holland alone, with its Amsterdam, its Leyden, its Haarlem, contained a very considerable number of large and notable cities where commerce thrived and the arts of life. Divided from the north by a line which time has sharpened was the more industrial, softer, less democratic south. The southern lands, fertile, rich in mineral resources, watered by great rivers, well clad with forests, contained the vast majority of the three hundred and fifty cities, the six thousand market towns, the myriad villages encompassed by the Netherland borders. Then as now this Belgium was a hive of manufacture, a storehouse of immense treasure. "It is one large town," Philip is reported to have exclaimed as he rode through it. The Delfts and Dorts and Leydens of the Dutch were tranquil towns where the barges floated sluggishly down canals spanned by countless ancient and reposeful bridges, and the citizens, industrious enough and when roused capable (as was to be seen) of heroic energy and stubbornness, went quietly about their business, buying and selling with the peasants who tilled the obstinate soil and the hard-tanned fishermen who ploughed the fields of the reluctant sea. Tumults and turbulence were rare with them. The great cities of the south, Bruges and Ghent in Flanders, Mons and Valenciennes in Hainault, Mechlin and Brussels and regal Antwerp, were roaring centres of trade with craft-gilds numerous, powerful, pompous, with great busy populations, merchants and shopkeepers and artisans, with opulent religious foundations; places where social life, not yet free of mediaeval feudalism, glittered brightly, built in the midst of a country dotted with the castles of a powerful nobility. Ghent had nine miles of walls, fifty-two great gilds. Antwerp, greater still,

was one of the first ports of the world. Every nation has its agents on her quays, the products of every quarter of the globe were heaped in her markets. What was the volume of her trade may be dimly guessed when we read that from England alone she imported 200,000 pieces of cloth annually; her ships went forth on every tide with silks and velvets, gold, silver and jewels, thread and cotton, spices and drugs, hops and fish and glass. The north, which knew little of such activity, was, if less noisy, more free, less subject to oligarchic influences, less amenable to authority in matters civil and religious.

Yet the differences of temperament then visible between the peoples of north and south might easily be, indeed have been, exaggerated. The Dutchman Meteren made no distinction of north or south when he wrote: "Those of the low countries are for the most part engaged in the pursuits of commerce and seafaring, more vigorously and diligently than any other people; so that it is said of them that they are greedy of gain and therefore seek peace and flee from war and show themselves patient under insults. But they suffer adversity without flinching, and are very jealous of their liberties and privileges, and very stubborn if repeatedly deceived. They are active, subtle, and laborious; they have learned men well skilled in all the arts and sciences." Everywhere a love of pageantry and lively music, bright colours and broad jokes was general amongst them. If the southern towns were more rich, geophysical conditions were responsible for it; if they were more uproarious and cultured it was because they were more rich. And if, on the other hand, during the struggle with despotism Holland and Zeeland and their neighbours may seem to have shown a more dauntless spirit than the Belgian provinces, it must be borne in mind that

the Spanish rule was actually centred in the latter, that repression was easier, resistance less hopeful, near the enemy's head-quarters than at a distance. Antwerp is an example; no man could say that its people shrank from suffering or were unreceptive to the reformed religion. Its sympathies were long with the revolution; yet it had not the chance of successful rebellion that other towns, smaller but more fortunately circumstanced, had; and the ultimate settlement found it remaining in Spanish hands, cut off from the free provinces. Time and separation, be it repeated, emphasized the differences, the incompatibility of temperament, between the two halves of the Netherlands; the most recent attempts to unite them have been the most hopeless. But it is as unjustifiable as it is simple to explain the religious and political "split" as the result of the one factor of race. Under Burgundian rule it had been Brabant and Flanders which had most doggedly fought against encroachment upon popular privileges. And three years after the death of William the Silent, Lord Buckhurst could say that the revolted provinces of the "Protestant north" still contained more Catholics than Protestants.

For hundreds of years with varying fortunes the provinces and cities had struggled for constitutional success. When the feudal ruler was an orphan Mary of Burgundy, charters were extorted, the right to vote supplies admitted, the principle of decentralization strengthened. When a Charles the Bold or a Charles the Fifth was Count of Holland or Duke of Brabant, reaction was experienced, charters were summarily revoked, ruthless pecuniary exactions were wrung from the people, everything worked towards the omnipotence of a central authority. Only Charles the Bold's fortunate death, perhaps, prevented the establishment of a complete unified despotism by his standing army, in spite of

the discontent of the Netherlanders. Charles the Fifth, drawing copious strength from beyond the provinces could take a bloody revenge upon Ghent when it protested legally against his continual demands for gold, could reduce the time-honoured charters to meaningless forms and establish in his Mechlin Court an instrument of absolutism dominant over all local courts. But the Netherlanders jealously cherished their rights even when they could not exercise them. These rights varied in every province; so did the constitutions. The councils of the great cities were diverse in composition, and composed here of representatives of nobles and cities, there of cities only, there again of cities, nobles and clergy. Each province required a different constitutional procedure from the Sovereign or his stadtholder, and when the Estates-General of the Netherlands were assembled none of the constituencies sending delegates surrendered the right of severally refusing supply—finance was the central “Parliament’s” chief business—if it so desired. All these local systems of self-government, all these local rights (including, as a rule, the right of freedom from ecclesiastical interference in lay matters, and often the right not to accept officials from beyond a province’s own borders) were in existence and ready for a vigorous resurrection whenever occasion offered.

Besides freedom of political action, freedom of religious thought had always been a conspicuous phenomenon in the Netherlands. In these thriving and active-brained towns scorn of ecclesiasticism and “popery” had repeatedly, from the earliest times, broken out into overt heresy. The twelfth and following centuries had seen a whole succession of sects, notably the Waldenses, gain formidable adherences in the Low Countries in the face of the fiercest persecution. Abuses in the mediaeval Church were as flagrant in

the provinces as anywhere, and the more flagitious they, the more rapid the spread of unorthodox tenets and the more frequent the institution of local laws limiting the power of the clergy. Erasmus, the Dutchman, came, preparing the ground for the startling crop of the German Luther. The Wittemberg manifesto swept over the Netherlands, making converts wherever it brushed. The Emperor Charles, unable to work his will in Germany where Emperor was anything but Imperator, meant to see to it that the damnable doctrine of the ex-monk should not take firm root in his paternal private heritage. In 1521, his first edict, issued quite unconstitutionally over the heads of the Estates, was launched: death and confiscation of property for every heretic. Two years later the first two Netherland heretic-martyrs (both monks) were burned at Brussels. Hundreds more followed; private worship and all discussion of religious fundamentals were made capital crimes. Extravagance begat extravagance; the extreme forms of Calvinism and even Anabaptism spread. Placard¹ after placard Charles poured out, each more drastic than the last; inquisitors were set at work; the most excruciating tortures were inflicted; the tale of victims swelled by thousands.

Thus then, in brief, may be indicated the state of the Netherlands when Philip assumed power and when, shortly afterwards, he left for Spain. A group of territories, ancient, populous, wealthy, peaceable but stubborn, had by irresistible force been compelled to submit to the wholesale suppression of material and intellectual rights very dear to its people. Great political discontent had seethed beneath the surface, sometimes burst forth

¹A "placcart" was "a printed sheet folded into a little quarto book" (Burgon).

openly; and religious beliefs and practices detested by the Sovereign were spreading in spite of sanguinary barriers. But the régime of Charles had had counterbalancing advantages that had tended to make the scorpions of his tyranny seem like mere whips. A Fleming himself, by birth, sympathies and language, he was lavish in his bestowal of posts, even in Spain, upon his compatriots. The "intellectuals" found employment in his civil service, the nobility in his prolonged wars. The commercial and artisan classes, though they resented the loss of their liberties, though they complained of his insatiable appetite for subsidies in furtherance of his insane ambitions, enjoyed during his reign—in that epoch mechanical invention and geographical discovery had created an atmosphere most favourable to trade-expansion, and inclusion in so vast a dominion as Charles's opened lucrative new markets to the bustling merchants of Ghent and Antwerp—a period of almost unexampled prosperity. The citizen, too, who took his religion on trust and had no consuming interest in constitutional problems grumbled at the Emperor's taxes and disliked his militarism, but had rather an affection for his personality. For Philip, as has been said, no such affection could conceivably be felt. In an age when the prevalence of a sceptical philosophy has infected many writers with a zeal for blackening the characters of good men and whitewashing those of bad men attempts have been made to prove that the gloomy tones in the traditional portrait of Philip have been laid on too freely. The outcome of these efforts is that it has been shown beyond all cavil that Philip was hard-working, that he was dyspeptic, and that he believed in a God—which nobody ever denied. This King was indisputably one of the worst who ever sat on throne. His talents were so mediocre that his very industriousness and atten-

tion to state affairs were rather curses than blessings. Every petty act of every subordinate official must be submitted to him for ratification. Bushels of departmental papers streamed into his comfortless study in the Escorial. He must pore over each, annotate each in his diffuse, ungrammatical, hair-splitting way, answer each—usually with a demand for further elucidation and delay. Possessing able assistants he hampered and obstructed them not only directly, but indirectly by virtue of his incurable passion for secret intriguing. In that long narrow meagre bearded face the character of the man is writ plain. Ill health merely intensified a darkness, a meanness, a creeping ferocity which were inborn. Philip was hypocritical, yet at the same time bigoted and superstitious to the core. One lifelong aim he had: the promotion of the joint glory and rule of himself and of the God he had fashioned in his own image. That aim before him he ignored not merely all considerations of humanity—assassination, execution, massacre of high and low, of friends, even perhaps of relatives, were methods he employed without a qualm—but all the common and obvious duties of any government which would avoid self-stultification. His colonial policy made Spain the parasite of a plundered America and prepared the way for the decadence of the next century. The Moriscoes, most industrious of his country's inhabitants, he must expel because they were not Christians; the Netherlanders he must at immense cost half ruin and half exterminate because some of them were not Catholics. Had Philip won the world it would have been a depopulated and devastated world that he won.

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When the King sailed from Flushing, brooding over the forwardness of the Estates and the suspicious conduct

of William of Orange, he left behind him his half-sister, Margaret, as regent. This woman, who lived apart from her Farnese husband, was an illegitimate child of Charles the Fifth, born of a citizen's daughter of Ghent several years before Charles's succession. She had been brought up in the royal circle, was imbued with its ideas and faithful to her brother and his Church. Masculine in voice and physique (she had a plain, strongly-lined face with hairy upper lip, and was a great huntress and horsewoman), she might have been expected to be a capable ruler and, indeed, in favourable circumstances, might never have been revealed as anything else. But crises, which were chronic during her tenure of office, always found her feeble and vacillating, despite all her temper and haughtiness, and she was usually in mental subjection to some servant with a will more dominant than her own.

To assist Margaret in her task there were Stadtholders for all the provinces, chosen from among the great nobles; Orange, Egmont, Mansfeld, the testy soldier Aremberg, the intolerant Hispanophile Berlaymont and others. But also there was an elaborate central organization composed of three councils: a Financial Council (under Berlaymont's presidency) to control the fiscal chambers of the provinces; a Privy Council (under the learned Frisian Viglius), the business of which was the supervision of the judicial administration; and a State Council (presided over by the Regent herself), which, besides having the charge of high matters of state, was in a vague position of authority over the other two councils. This State Council had as members the Bishop of Arras (Granvelle), President Viglius, the Prince of Orange, and Count Egmont (who was Stadtholder of Artois and Flanders); to whom were added when they had returned after accompanying

Philip to Spain, Count Horn, the Admiral, and the Duke of Aerschot. Greater diversity of temperament and character could not have been squeezed into so narrow a compass.

Viglius, the legal member, yellow-haired and rosy, was an erudite man, a student of the classics, a friend of Erasmus, a compiler of informative memoirs. Not of exalted extraction he was very subservient to the great personages among whom he was placed. Pacific and mild enough by nature his pusillanimity, servility and avarice made him consent to the most infamous measures rather than offend those who seemed to have a firm hold upon power or sacrifice an emolument. For many years he hoarded money, even becoming a priest in order to qualify for a benefice ; for as many years he stifled his conscience and worked devotedly for the alien governors of his country.

The Bishop of Arras, the ecclesiastical member, was also a man of culture, and an amasser of fortunes ; otherwise he was as the poles apart from Viglius. One who had made his way up the staircase of Church and State by sheer brilliance combined with good temper and adroitness, he was a man of the world, friend and companion (at this time) of nobles like Orange, to whom one of his brothers (Jerome Perrenot) had been tutor and another *maître d'hôtel*. He kept princely state. His presence was commanding ; his manners, when he so cared, delightful. Quite unscrupulous, not more intolerant in matters of religion than the ordinary great churchman of his time, he served Philip and himself zealously ; but his ambition, when to a great extent satisfied, unveiled an overweening pride which was to help on his undoing.

Of the four nobles, the most influential in the country, the Duke of Aerschot deserves least notice. Inheritor

of riches and high rank, owner of one of the finest palaces in Brussels, he had a great conceit which was the countenance of a little soul. Very conventional, he lacked all comprehension of the new movements around him and a fancied slight could alienate him from his closest associates. Of black-browed Horn, too, little is to be said. The admiral was honest enough after his lights; he worked hard, clung to his faith, reduced himself to beggary in his lord's service. In truth, though, his abilities, views and career were alike commonplace, and, if the manner of his end afterwards gave him fame and a halo, that was but an accident. Egmont, however, the gallant victor of St. Quentin, was a figure of more distinction. "Chief personage in these provinces after the Prince of Orange," this fine soldier, vehement and vivid, was one of the idols of his contemporaries. His repute had spread the world over, he was expected to achieve things, he had the power of charming men and drawing them after him. But mingled with the proud recklessness of his small, square, deeply-furrowed face with its jagged brows and wrinkled eyes, its heavy moustache and coarse little beard, was something of wavering, of stupidity, and of petulance. Egmont was vain; his chivalrousness was rather conventional than instinctive; his outlook was limited; he lacked foresight; his displays of initiative were fitful and disjected. Like Horn he was to be dignified by his death; unlike Horn he had a certain native dignity too. There was much in him that was trivial, weak and even contemptible; but his external splendour, his openness of soul and the strength of his emotions make him one of the most interesting personalities in the great drama.

Lastly there is the Prince of Orange. William, when Philip went away, was no more than twenty-six, but plenitude of experience had matured him early.

An excellent portrait of this period shows him standing, tensely reposeful, in armour, with a thin, nervous, strong hand resting on his shining helmet. The head with its slightly waved brown hair, is long, the brows thoughtful, well moulded and hollowed above the eyes, the nose slightly aquiline—but not thin—with big sensitive nostrils, the chin cloven and a little upturned, and covered with an incipient light beard. About the dark, keen, meditative eyes and the firm down-drooping lips lie alert determination, restrained pride, some irony, and a shade of sadness. There is breeding and self-confidence, sense and idealism in his face, and a something which makes the observer forget William is a young man. But the characteristics seized by the painter as salient were not all-pervading. This portrait of quiet strength and melancholy tells but a half-truth, albeit a profound one. The William of daily life was reticent, but never reserved, serious but never solemn, at once “*Le Taciturne*” and the most fascinating of talkers. He mixed with ease in the life of Brussels, a lavish and winning host, a good companion, a sportsman fond of hawk, hound and horse, a genial grandee who always had an unaffected word of greeting for servant and citizen, was never known to lose his temper, had no false “superiority”. Thus writes a foe of him: “*C’est le plus fin et plus accord qu’y soit aujourd’hui entre les vivantz ; il s’est fait aimer du peuple par son humilité et liberalité, et par son éloquence et vivacité d’esprit s’est rendu admirable au plus grandz ; bref, il semble que Dieu l’ayt doué de tous les dons de nature que l’on scauroit souhaiter pour gagner le cœur des hommes.*” He (Pontus Payen) goes on to say that, incredible though it might seem, even the prelates and churchmen of the country, his life-long adversaries, “bore him a very good affection, especially those who had some intimacy or talk with him at the states-general; and

had nothing in their mouths but his modesty, his courtesy and generosity, so opposed to the haughtiness, pride and ambition of the other lords of the country."

William lived at this time luxuriously, carelessly, like his friends. A score of gentlemen, another score of pages were in his retinue. He kept open house; his kitchens were as ant-heaps of menials; and the extravagance of his banquets was the talk of the city. The force of events was soon to change his way of life, but as yet it lay amid very pleasant pastures.

CHAPTER IV

THE SAXON MARRIAGE

“NOT the Estates but you.” The exclamation in so far as it singled William out as the unique protagonist of rebellion, was true enough in a prophetic sense. But taken as a record of fact it was unnecessarily emphatic. William was very far from being a rebel yet, either against Philip or against Catholicism. He was still a devoted servant of Margaret of Parma and a fast friend of the Bishop of Arras, the too-ambitious but clever and entertaining ecclesiastic now rapidly gaining a complete ascendancy at Court. As member of the State-Council, as Stadtholder of Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht, he was resolute to assist the Government to the best of his ability save when he had orders, which he secretly disobeyed, to murder Protestants. As a Catholic he was, although always averse from extreme measures, willing and anxious to suppress heretical doctrines in his own principality of Orange where he had, by law and tradition, rightful powers far in excess of those which Philip could claim in Flanders or Brabant. Philip’s action in fastening upon him, if he did fasten upon him, as his principal enemy would seem to have sprung from an intuitive feeling of hostility. Here was a man, he felt, whom no bribes could tempt, no threats turn, from his purpose. And small skill in the reading of physiognomies was needed perhaps to perceive that a free spirit and an inflexible will lay behind that broad, open brow, those

mild but steady and penetrating eyes, that firm, resolute mouth.

But everything tended to drive Orange into active opposition, not merely to details of the Government's policy but to the Government itself. As far back as November, 1555, when he was first appointed a state councillor he was one of those irritated grandees of whom Granvelle wrote to Queen Mary of Hungary that they doubted "whether they were being put on the council solely for form, and in order that they might bear their share of the popular feeling aroused by the measures which were to be taken, without having any real power on the council". In precisely that position he now found himself. No sooner had the new machinery of government got into working order than in the State Council an inner circle began to form. This "Consulta," composed of the Bishop of Arras, Berlaymont, an obstinate hot-tempered and very bigoted Netherland noble, and the obsequious lawyer Viglius, pulled the strings of affairs; Orange and Egmont finding themselves councillors in name only, kept in office merely in order to make it appear as though the alien rulers had the support and took the advice of the native chiefs. Patriotic and humanitarian motives apart, Orange began to feel a keen personal grievance. The royal snubs rankled.

For a while he was unable to assert himself save by way of making in Council ineffective protests against the proceedings of the Consulta and the new repressive measures. Not yet was he strong enough to assume an intransigent position on the basis of any principle, and he was neither so stupid nor so irascible as to follow the example of Egmont who lost his balance (no difficult task with him), abused the Spaniards openly, and went so far as to attempt to kill Margaret's bishop in Margaret's presence. He was incessant in his denunciation of

the edicts, of the impending appointment of the new bishops (i.e., of the new inquisition), and of the retention of the corps of Spanish desperadoes of which he was supposed to be the captain. But important private affairs absorbed his chiefest attention during the years 1560 and 1561; and of these some account may now be given.

Returning to the capital on 15 October, 1559, from Rheims where he had been to witness Francis II's coronation, he found awaiting him letters announcing the death of his father at the age of 72. He had seen little of the old man, but the family feeling was strong and William was genuinely grieved. On the same day he wrote his brother Louis a beautiful and simple letter, acknowledging the debt he owed his father and begging Louis to comfort his mother. As head of the house—although the German estates went to John—he assured his sisters Catherine, Juliana, and Magdalena, of his love for them: "If they have lost one father they have found another in me". And he counselled—the most ingenious of his detractors could not find for him a motive for being hypocritical with Louis—submission to the will of God who had always, he added thankfully, shown favour to the Nassaus.

In the postscript to this letter occurs the earliest mention of the famous Saxon marriage which, to judge by the amount written about it, was considered by William's contemporaries to be the most important event in his career. The Prince refers to a journey Louis was meditating in connexion with "the business you wot of". He was 26. His wife had been dead a year and everything urged him to make a speedy second marriage. The convention of the time had it that a young Prince without a wife ought almost to be considered a contradiction in terms. His children stood in need of a mother. As a man he craved for companion-

ship and domesticity. Above and beyond these things, however, there were political considerations which—he felt very differently later in life—at this time probably counted for more with him than any others in such a matter. Strong as was his position in the Netherlands, he knew that circumstances might make it desirable that it should be still stronger. The man who might be called upon to defy the most powerful of earth's monarchs would need all the support he could obtain. Already he had attempted to make a frankly mercenary marriage with a young French widow, Madame de Touthville, and had thought of one as frankly political with the daughter of the Duchess of Lorraine. These negotiations falling through, he threw all his energies into compassing the hand of an heiress who could bring a very tolerable dowry and influence more useful than any that could be wielded by the Lorraines. The lady was Anne, niece and ward of the Elector Augustus of Saxony, and daughter of no less a person than that Maurice who had been the worst of the many thorns which at one time or another pierced the flesh of the Emperor Charles. Sixteen years of age, Anne already displayed an erratic temperament. Her intelligence was above the ordinary, and on occasion she could show a pungent wit. Facially she was passably well-looking—large liquid brown eyes under very arched eyebrows, broad aquiline nose, and curved, red, almost sensual lips, were framed in a wide forehead, round deep cheeks and a fat, somewhat receding chin. Her build was awkward and she was a little lame. But Orange had never seen her and to him her personality was, it is to be feared, the least interesting thing about her. Just then he was not an idealist in quest of a paragon, but a potential rebel scheming a political *coup*. If he be blamed for making such a match when he might have known better, it must

be remembered that the provocation was great, that such alliances were sanctified by custom and, finally, that he suffered for it. He had learnt much but he had not yet learnt, as he lived to do, enough about himself to know that a life of affairs would not suffice to satisfy his needs, that he required draughts from the hearth to give him strength to fight the battles of the greater world. At 26, with his head simmering with vague plans for circumventing his enemies and (for he was not entirely altruistic) for advancing himself, he would in all likelihood have been anxious for a marriage with a woman who might bring him the alliance of the German Protestant Princes had she had the intellect of an idiot and the appearance of an ape.

Louis of Nassau opened the question with Augustus; then Count Schwartzburg journeyed to Dresden to make a formal proposal; then in May, 1560, having obtained permission from Margaret of Parma to go to Germany "on family business" William himself met the Elector at Deventer. Nothing was settled; and in November returning to Germany to give his sister Catherine away to Count Schwartzburg, Orange went on to Dresden itself. He found Augustus (who feared that if Anne remained in Germany some one might claim the Saxon title for her) almost as eager for the marriage as himself: Anne, on seeing him, became infatuated with his person and with what she conceived to be the brilliance of his prospects. The Devil himself, declared she with her customary vigour, should not prevent the union. The Prince was willing, the Princess was willing, the Princess's guardian was willing. Nevertheless there were still great obstacles in the way of the match. William was a Catholic and Anne's relatives, especially her grandfather, old Landgrave Philip of Hesse, foamed with ire at the thought of the unholy alliance. William

was a Netherlander and it would require some adroitness to convince his master Philip that he was not simply powerful already, that his religious orthodoxy was not weakening and that a nobleman could be loyal to the King and yet marry the daughter of a man who had been the King's father's bitterest enemy. Nearly two years passed between the first proposals and the wedding. All this time William strenuously applied himself to the task of conciliating each of these diverse elements without irremediably alienating the other or compromising himself by making pledges which he might not be able to fulfil. By dint of very great labour and shrewdness he succeeded.

Philip of Spain was the first to yield—in letter if not in spirit. At the outset Orange's suggestion irritated him, and he set little store by the Prince's ingenuous assurance (17 Feb., 1560) that he was hoping by the marriage to win influence over the Germans in the King's interests. Not daring to forbid the marriage forthright, lest his authority should be flouted and a worse thing befall, he entered into correspondence with Granvelle and Margaret on the subject of William's present, and possible future, religious views. Fortunately, these were known to be unexceptionable, as in such matters the Prince had not yet begun to think for himself. He still was more a man of this world than of the next; his spiritual self had not yet developed. He had Protestant mother and brothers; he knew their virtues, and this as much as his inherent broadmindedness prevented him from being a bigot; but, as a matter of "good form," he observed the Catholic ceremonials and intended to continue to do so. Granvelle—as yet an intimate friend of the Prince—knew this well and reassured his master on the point. "Never," wrote he in March, 1560,—

“have I seen in him a thing which has made me suspicious ; quite the contrary . . . as far as religion is concerned all the Council are sound ; and certainly, above all, the Prince of Orange and the Count of Egmont have shown, as far as is yet visible, a very good will.”

Even as late as March, 1562, the prelate could affirm : “Of the Prince one cannot say he has weakened on religion, and there is nothing which leads me to suppose such a thing”. Granvelle’s assurances were reinforced by others from Orange himself who wrote to the King a devoutly Catholic letter protesting his good faith. Philip, vacillating, threw responsibility upon the Regent Margaret. Neither she nor Granvelle desired the union ; but they had not the courage of their predilections. Granvelle bluntly told the King (6 October, 1560) “as to the Prince it seems to me his chief aim in this alliance is the advancement of his House,” but the Cardinal had been reminded by William that Netherland law allowed him to marry whom he chose, and that asking Philip’s consent was a piece of gratuitous loyal courtesy. They cross-examined the Prince and obtained from him an affirmation of orthodoxy and a declaration that his wife should “live as a Catholic”. Consent from the Catholic quarter, therefore, was grudging, but after a fashion it was given.

The Protestant opposition proved less easy to surmount ; in the end a *détour* had to be made around its base. Happily for Orange, Philip of Hesse had not the same power of making things unpleasant for him as had Philip of Spain. The old Landgrave was rocklike stubborn to the appeals both of Augustus and of Augustus’s would-be foster son-in-law. Yet those appeals were forcible enough. Nothing if not outspoken was that of the Saxon Elector. “Here,” he said in

fect, "is a misshapen, repellent, ill-tempered girl. If we don't marry her off now we may never get another opportunity." That did not matter to the Landgrave. He had, in his time, fought for the reformed religion; he had suffered long years of imprisonment for it. Anne might have all the vices, Orange all the virtues; but William was a Catholic, servant of a Catholic King and friend of a Catholic priest whom he believed to have been the scoundrelly cause of his imprisonment by Charles V. More; in Germany—the Landgrave had the caste pride of Baron Thunder-ten-Dronckh—Nassau was a mere Count. William's personal overtures were courteously but firmly rejected: a Protestant Princess would court ruin by contracting such an alliance. The Landgrave wished the Prince (so he told an envoy of the latter), should the worst come to the worst and the marriage take place, to allow Anne to have a private evangelical preacher, or at least occasional celebrations of the sacrament in her own chamber. Orange could not hear of it. He had not promised that his wife should embrace Catholicism, but he had certainly promised that she should "live Catholically". But, after all, continued he rather flippantly, what did she want with devotional tomes at her time of life? "She shall not," he said in the words of the Landgrave's son and successor, "be bothered with such melancholy things, but instead of the holy Scriptures shall read Amadis de Gaule and suchlike light books which treat of love, and instead of knitting and sewing she shall learn to dance a galliard and such other *cortoisies* as are fashionable amongst the well-bred in the land." This finished the poor Landgrave; he branded the marriage as "odious" and washed his hands of all responsibility for it. For his part he did not want to be amongst those who would have to answer for it in the Day of Judgment.

Augustus and William agreed perforce to ignore the old man. Everything had been amicably settled except the religious question. In April, 1561, the Elector sent William a little list of pledges to which he trusted the Prince would be so good as to append his signature. The Princess was to remain a Protestant; she was to go out of the Netherlands to take the sacrament whenever she pleased; she was to have a gospel preacher during times of sickness; and her children were to be instructed in the doctrines of the Augsburg Confession. William, probably, would have been quite willing to sign this document had his own inclinations been the only ones he had to consult. But he knew that Philip and Margaret would regard such a step as an act of apostasy and disloyalty. His "life, honour and fortune" would be at stake, he declared. Augustus—conscious, and probably verbally assured, that William would never attempt to coerce his wife—did not push his demand for a written pledge, and the wedding was at last fixed for 24 August, 1561—St. Bartholomew's Day—Leipsig being the favoured town.

The Landgrave did not come. His family did not come. Excepting Montigny, Philip's deputy, the principal Netherland grandees did not come; Margaret, who saw (to use the phrase of an English observer) that the Prince was "waxing grette," having refused to let them leave the Provinces.¹ Nevertheless the nuptials had as gorgeous a setting and made as great a stir as any that century had known. The Kings of Denmark and Spain with Dukes and Bishops galore were proxied

¹ Another reason appears in a letter from Ric. Clough to Sir Thomas Gresham: "There ys commandment geven by the Kyng that no man in all thys Low Countrie bearing any offys shall goo with him in payne of losing his offys and [risking] the kyng's displeasure besyde: with expresse words because they shall nott be infectyd with any of the herysies that is yousyd in that countrie".

by brilliant embassages, and the Elector of Cologne, the Dukes of Jülich and Lüneburg, Orange's brothers John, Louis and Adolphus, and nearly a hundred other German and Dutch Princes and nobles were present in person, each dignitary accompanied by a regiment of cooks, pages, butlers and valets. Eleven hundred horse came with these notables, scores of well-born youths were summoned by the Elector to act as waiters at the feast—with a warning not to get drunk whilst on duty. On Saturday the 23rd all the guests were in Leipsig, and Orange and his retinue slept at Meneburg. On the Sunday the two parties rode out amidst the huzzas of the burghers to meet one another just outside Leipsig walls. Then the united force, five thousand horsemen in all, went in procession back to the town-hall where the Princess Anne, standing on the staircase, welcomed her bridegroom. A slight break in the public celebrations occurred there, for the bride and bridegroom with the Elector and Electress and five witnesses retired with one Wolf Siedel, a notary, to an upper chamber. In that room William by word of mouth promised the Elector to respect Anne's Protestant faith. Down again they walked, and the procession, headed by the royal orchestra, swept round to the great hall where the marriage ceremony was performed by Dr. Pfeffinger. Symbolically the Prince and his bride were placed openly upon a great bed of gold with golden curtains. Spiced drinks and sweetmeats were served, and then every one retired to dress for dinner, which was taken with an obligato of merry tunes.

Next day there was another procession, a Lutheran ceremony in the Church of St. Nicholas, a dinner and a tournament. There was no thought of a Catholic marriage, as the principle *cujus regio ejus religio* was accepted as applying to weddings. The jousts and

banquets continued for the remainder of the week, with foot-tourneys, magnificent masques and hilarious fancy-dress riding at the ring. According to the archives the Saxon Elector (at whose behest those archives were prepared) was the hero of the week's tournaments; Orange at all events cut no great figure. On the following Monday all these revelries came to a close with the departure of the Prince and Princess of Orange for Brussels.

Meanwhile affairs in the Netherlands had been marching. Early in 1560 the population was shocked by the issue of a Bull confirming the establishment of the new archiepiscopal and episcopal sees. There were now to be three of the former and eighteen of the latter. Denunciations showered by writers, old and modern, upon the mere act of increase are scarcely justifiable; the country was thickly crowded with populous cities and the dioceses were unwieldy. Not unnaturally, however, the Netherlanders were suspicious of any change originating from above; and in any case some of the powers put into the hands of the new prelates were utterly illegal. "As far," says Motley, "as ink and sealing-wax could defend a land against sword and fire, the Netherlands were impregnable against the edicts and the renewed episcopal inquisitions." But to Philip ink was ink, black or red, "and it was nothing more". He had sworn to maintain provincial charters such as that of Brabant which guaranteed to the inhabitants the right of justice in open court, the exclusion of foreigners from office and protection against ecclesiastical pretensions. But oaths; what were oaths? A man with a divine mission has something more important to think about than oaths. The Spanish troops were still in the provinces, the bishops were to have absolute jurisdiction in matters of religion, and the Burgundian

Granvelle was, as Grand Vizier and Primate, to control the machinery of the new tyranny.

But a great clamour went up from the cities and Granvelle saw that the King had overreached himself. The people feared the Spanish inquisition, said he, although the *Spanish* inquisition was not to be introduced. In places they were dangerously near revolt. Orange had resigned the command of the foreign troops; he and the other nobles led the demand for their withdrawal, and in the autumn of 1560, after Granvelle and the Regent had in the most emphatic manner pressed for their withdrawal, Philip allowed the hated regiments to be deported for the south, where they took part in the Moorish War. The popular unrest was by no means diminished. All the odium aroused by the Government's measures concentrated upon the head of Granvelle who, as a matter of cold fact, had not (as a financial loser by the change) suggested or supported the erection of the newly-created bishoprics and who, indeed, had he not thought that faithfulness to Philip was the only avenue leading to his own advancement and glorification, might not even have been a very vigorous persecutor. But he certainly did nothing to modify the popular exasperation against himself. His ambition and pride grew by what they fed on and after (in February, 1561) he had, at Margaret's instance, been given a cardinal's hat, his insolent haughtiness became, both to the commonalty and to the men of blood who regarded him as an upstart plebeian, more intolerable than ever. Egmont, as has been said, was barely prevented from murdering (or executing) him. Orange, for years a close friend of the churchman, quarrelled with him in June, after Granvelle and the Duchess had insulted him by drawing up a secret list of magistrates for Antwerp and then asking him, as burgrave of the

city, to make the appointments accordingly. William told Margaret that he would not be her menial, and Granvelle informed the Chancellor of Brabant that he had done with the Prince. The breach was not overtly final till the autumn, Cardinal and Prince writing each other friendly letters during the wedding festivities. Netherland observers ascribed its completion to the influence of Anne, who is alleged to have learnt from William that Granvelle had intrigued against their marriage, and thenceforth to have egged him on, day and night, to oppose the Cardinal. At most Anne could, however, only have intensified feelings existent in a very strong quality before her intervention. For in July, a month before the wedding, Orange and Egmont were writing to Philip formally complaining of Granvelle and the Consulta and threatening to resign office. They might as well have addressed their remonstrances to the nearest wall. Count Horn, the Admiral, was just leaving Madrid at the time and very respectfully expressed sympathy with their sentiments. "What, wretch?" snapped the monarch of a hemisphere, "you all complain of this man but there is not one of you who can tell me why he complains." For Granvelle, most cunning of correspondents, saw to it that Philip should suspect the nobles of ulterior designs. Had it not been that, owing to the protracted Moorish wars and appallingly wasteful administration, the royal finances were in a disastrous state, Philip might have had recourse to force at once. But he was bankrupt, withheld his hand—and sent William 3000 crowns for a ring as a wedding present.

Orange, devoting himself once again to public business, found himself more neglected than ever, losing authority every day. Granvelle, with a new red hat on his head and a triple crown in his mind's eye, treated his

whilom friend and associate with undisguised contempt. William was so flouted at Court that his young wife began openly to bemoan her disappointment. The poor girl perhaps had reason. She had come to Brussels to queen it. The first time she met the Duchess, Margaret (at Granvelle's instigation) stared at her without speaking. "Good God," cried quick-tempered Anne, "I won't be gaped at as though I were a mad-woman," and unceremoniously retired. The reorganized episcopate was already active. The old terrible days of Charles' inquisition, of burnings and hangings, and torn-out tongues and twisted limbs, of torture by water and rack, were returning. Preachers and citizens who read the Scriptures or denied transubstantiation were once more being led to the stake, and popular outbursts, all the bolder because it was known that Orange and other influential persons were out of sympathy with the oppressor, testified to the country's feeling. By the spring of 1562 the Cardinal, in Gresham's words, was "hated of all men" and "clean out of reputation of all the nobles".

CHAPTER V

THE STRUGGLE WITH GRANVELLE

GRESHAM'S was not an exaggerated statement of the Cardinal's situation. When he had entered Mechlin to assume the Archbishopric he had done so in the presence of a silent multitude. Voiceless loathing had now developed into open execration. Every town in the provinces was flooded with pamphlets, broadsides, songs, caricatures, having Granvelle as butt. Not being as yet strong enough to fight with the sword the Netherlanders fought with tongue and pen. The Cardinal was the old hen who hatched bishops, the pantaloon of farce, the only-begotten son of the Devil in whom his august father was well-pleased. Men resorted to ingenious devices to secure that he himself should not miss these ribaldries; and, although he had never done much to court popularity, unpopularity stung him to the quick. His bitterness was intensified by a perception that his power, never greater to outward seeming than at the moment, was in reality slipping away from him. He had got supreme authority into the hands of a Consulta consisting of himself, Berlaymont his sycophant, and Viglius who rarely spoke save when he was addressed. But Berlaymont was displaying a tendency to desert the ship that might sink, and the Frisian lawyer, who had made as much money—it was a good deal—as he wanted, was praying to be allowed to retire. Again, the Duchess over whom he had gained so complete a control, had at last become piqued

by the consciousness that she was a mere puppet in the churchman's grasp, and weekly she grew colder in her demeanour towards him. Almost every great noble was against him: Orange, Egmont, Horn, Berghem, Montigny and both Mansfelds, and all the young fire-brands who looked to Henry of Brederode and Robert de la Marck, Lord of Lumey, for a lead. Even those who, like Aerschot and Aremberg, were not against him were not for him. No one remained on his side save those of his creatures whom he had raised from obscurity and who knew that his fall would imply theirs. When he gave a dinner, the great men refused his invitations and he had to line his table with spittle-licking nonentities. Egmont ostentatiously patronized the purveyors of anti-Cardinal lampoons; other nobles, even more careless, threatened Granvelle's life. In his position his only chance lay in retaining the confidence of his King, and he wrote to Philip daily, poisoning his mind by subtle innuendo against the magnates, urging him—not that he needed goads—to continue the work of crushing out heresy and defending his own autocratic conduct. That, if possible, the national resentment against himself should be cooled, would the King, he asked, authorize a public denial of the reports that the new bishoprics had been his idea, that the Spanish Inquisition was to be introduced into the Low Countries, and that he had advised Philip to "cut off half-a-dozen heads"? Philip did so; adding the footnote that "it might not be a bad plan" to cut off the said heads, although undoubtedly the Cardinal had not proposed it! But who could have expected the tortured and enraged provinces to believe on the authority of their oppressor that that oppressor's principal servant was innocent of blame?

William of Orange, sensible and level-headed as ever, did not commit himself to any outrageous act.

But he helped to form a league for overthrowing the Cardinal, and continued his firm though moderately worded protests against the Consulta's arrogating the powers of the Council. His respect for authority had, however, weakened perceptibly. He summoned the Knights of the Fleece to his palace, and, heedless of accusations of ambition from groundlings like Bossu and Berlaymont, strove, albeit in vain, to reunite them in a campaign for the recovery of lost liberties. When, in November, 1562, his request to be sent to Frankfort, to deputize Philip at Maximilian's coronation as King of the Romans was refused—Aerschot, whom Granvelle knew to be corruptible through his vanity, being sent in his stead—William, desirous of visiting Germany in order to help his brothers lift the enormous burden of debt from the Nassau estates, went in a private capacity before the necessary permission from Philip had arrived. True, he did not make himself unnecessarily offensive, writing a very respectful explanatory letter on his return. But in his old, not so very old, days of courtiership he would have thought many times before taking such a step, and asking his Sovereign's consent after it was irrevocable. Secretly, he was going farther still. Already shaping in his brain were schemes for forming foreign alliances against the tyrant. Not the least important motive of his journey to Frankfort was a desire to seize so favourable an opportunity of getting into touch with all the leading German Princes at once. During his stay there he begged those Princes, in turn, to do their best to check the Spanish oppression in the Netherlands, and intuitively realizing even thus early the need for a strong and united Protestantism—one might almost say, predicting by implication the Thirty Years' War—advised them to put an end to the contentions of the Scandinavian Protestant Powers. Con-

scious of the possibility of war as between Spain and England, he cultivated with assiduity the friendship of Elizabeth's agents. More significant still of his growing independence of thought, whilst Philip was furiously attempting to persuade the Netherlanders to send men or money to help the Guises and Catherine of Medici against the England-aided Huguenots, William, not forgetful of the Bois de Vincennes, was pondering the feasibility of making a pact with those very Huguenots to resist the encroachments of both the Medicean woman and the Spanish King. Under the pressure of converging circumstances he felt himself becoming gradually the centre of an organized resistance to the "spider of the Escorial". Granvelle and Margaret may have been wrong in asserting that he had actually whispered to Frankfort friends: "One day we shall be the stronger"; but they had a serviceably good idea of his thoughts if not of his words.

It is a notable fact about William's life—as doubtless about others—that misfortunes never came to him singly. Loss of the Court's favour was rapidly followed by loss of his wife's. Political anxieties were reinforced by domestic worries. The woman who had been dazzled by the greatness of his name and fame was enraged at the apparent blighting of his career. By her squabbles with other ladies as to precedence and by her general eccentricity Anne of Saxony did her best to drag her new name through the mire. Insulting her husband she treated his unconscionably mild remonstrances with open contempt. Another blow to William was the death of their first child. It was born in November whilst he was away at Frankfort. Lord and Lady Grobbendonck acted as impromptu sponsors for it, in the absence of greater folk, and it died immediately after. His financial embarrassments, again, were a

source of continual stress. Not luxurious or self-indulgent in his habits, he had kept an enormous household going, partly out of an idea of maintaining his position in a fitting way, and partly out of sheer carelessness. Involved as he was he lent his brothers money¹ to clear off the 300,000 florin debt on the German estates, and, as a consequence, he was shortly afterwards borrowing money from Jews and other friends of man, and getting his brothers to give mortgages on their property as security. Troubled as he was, faced with difficulties through which he could see no clear way, he still strove to maintain his accustomed mental balance, living the ordinary social life of his caste and indulging as frequently as possible in his own favourite sport of hawking.

In the autumn of 1562 Montigny went to Spain, nominally as envoy of the Regent, but in part as spyer-out-of-the-land for Orange, Egmont and the other nobles. Philip had been prepared by Granvelle, who with his daily potions of innuendo, had thoroughly confirmed in the King the belief that the seigniors were mere self-seeking traitors striking for power, and that the States were claiming privileges not by right theirs, but had advised His Majesty for the time being to dissemble. Montigny, generally speaking, was received in a friendly way, although he was informed that the Netherland inquisition was not the Spanish inquisition and that it would not be ended. But like his brother Horn, he had a stormy interview with Philip just before leaving Spain. Unable to contain himself in the presence of this kind and sympathetic King he inveighed against Granvelle, the new sees and the inquisition with

¹ Things were very bad at Dillenburg. The upper servants wrote to the brothers: "we see, gentlemen, that you are no longer in a position to maintain your former condition and state, and since we see no remedy we beg you dismiss us *car nous ne saurions voir la misère*".

exceeding warmth. Not so many years later he was back in Madrid and was given cause to remember this conversation. Even in December, 1563, when he travelled home to Brussels, the innocent man very likely regretted it. For he found that William of Orange, who had light-fingered friends in the Escorial, knew what Philip's private thoughts really were, and was afire with indignation because of Philip's intention not to give way in the slightest degree to Flemish opinion.

Orange's position gradually hardened. In the spring of 1563 he heard that Philip had received a report that he, Egmont and their friends had turned Protestant and were plotting with the Huguenots. At the heart of this mountainous lie lay a grain of truth, for, beyond denial, he and the Count Palatine (son-in-law of the old Landgrave, now William's warm friend) had framed a plan—it fell through—for rescuing Condé from prison. But his Catholicism was still untainted and Egmont's almost fanatical, and his anger was such that he rose in open Council and accused the Cardinal, whom he knew to be the father of most lies, of having generated this one. Margaret, although secretly weary of the priest, defended him; and the nobles departed, bent on taking more drastic measures than they had hitherto adopted.

As a result of this decision, on 11 March, 1563, William, Count Egmont and Count Horn dispatched to Madrid a special messenger with a letter to Philip containing a considered but sweeping indictment of Granvelle and his regime. Excepting Aerschot, whose vanity had been offended because no one took him for a greater man than he was, Aremberg, whose sympathies were autocratic and inquisitional, and Berlaymont, who besides being bigoted thought that Orange's was the losing side, almost every Netherland grandee approved of the

missive's contents. Granvelle's authority, said the three signatories, was excessive and its mode of exercise ruinous. Day by day discontent amongst great and small in the provinces was swelling; loyalty to Church and King impelled them to speak their minds once and for all. They had every man of influence at their back but rebellion or self-advancement was meditated by none of them; in proof of their disinterestedness they asked to be removed from the Council of State. Granvelle who, through Arembert or another, had learnt the nature of this document, was not the man to quit the field without a blow. "There are several fools," said he at the Chancellor of Brabant's table, "who have played me this evil turn; I shall not forget it." He sent Philip a counterblast, repeating his old insinuations against the nobles and suggesting that they (William the Silent especially) might do useful work if sent, say, to Sicily. These two letters were the first shots in an epistolary battle which lasted throughout the year.

Philip took nearly three months to reply to the nobles' manifesto. The task of invention was not so easy to him as it was congenial. When his answer did come it proved to be well up to his usual standard of unsatisfactoriness. There was little reference either to their statement of fact or to their arguments. He contented himself with saying that he did not dismiss his ministers without better reason and fuller particulars than the three seemed inclined to give. Should anything be really wrong, he added, he would soon put it right, for he was on the point of coming to the Netherlands in person. Simultaneously he ordered the Regent Margaret *sub rosa* to let matters remain precisely where they were. In yet another letter, addressed to Egmont, he endeavoured (following the advice of Granvelle and Alva) to detach Egmont from the confraternity by

flattery and a pretence of friendship, inviting the Count to come to Spain and discuss the Cardinal with him. Egmont, although not overwise, was wise enough to see the futility of going to deliver the same message as Montigny had delivered in the preceding year, and the letter which he had himself signed, in the same year. He joined Orange and Horn therefore in another letter to Philip, explaining that the crisis in the Netherlands was so serious that none of them dare leave the spot, and recapitulating their charges against Granvelle and their protestations of loyalty. Rash, honest Horn further committed himself by emphasizing these declarations under a separate cover.

Meanwhile Granvelle had been making the assurance of Philip's obstinacy and suspicions doubly sure by incessant reflections upon his opponents. Of Egmont he customarily made an exception, his knowledge of the proud cavalryman's shallowness leading him to see in him the weak spot in the league. But of Orange's unsusceptibility to bribes of any sort there was no doubt, and Philip's inflammable mind was constantly inflamed with new stories of the Prince's cunning, his need and eagerness to get money by hook or by crook, his double-facedness, his hypocrisy and his boundless ambition. "You might invite him to Spain" (*i.e.*, the gallows), remarked the Cardinal, with a temporary lapse into stupidity. It would have taken more than a *billet-doux* from the Philip who had assaulted him at Flushing to fetch Orange to Spain. Montigny, wrote Granvelle, had said that all men of intelligence were Protestants. Horn was planning the Cardinal's assassination. With Berghem as chief conspirator, ran another of his alarming tales, the nobles were constantly holding secret meetings . . . he did not know why, but still . . . They had all refused, he lamented, to help in the holy

work of burning heretics—which must be pushed on with all possible vigour. They were planning a republic with themselves as oligarchs, and had seduced the common people by bruiting it about that taxes were unnecessary. But he did not wish to prejudice His Majesty against anybody. “God knows,” he declared to Perez in a letter quoted by Motley, “God knows that I always speak of them with respect, which is more than they do of me. But God forgive them all.” That delicate piece of pathetic altruism is worthy, if the anachronistic allusion may for once be forgiven, of Tiny Tim himself.

What were William’s thoughts as this dilatory year dragged by? What amount of justification, if any, was there for Granvelle’s charges against him? How much would an admission of some of these charges affect his reputation?

That he had changed his religion was of course untrue. He was daily associated more and more closely with Protestants: the Calvinists of France, the Lutherans of Germany, including the brothers for whom he had a greater affection than for anyone else, and those Hesses who, when he was a suitor, had looked upon him with so much repugnance. That his wife’s Protestantism should, as his enemies at Court alleged, have inclined him towards heresy, is not on the face of it a suggestion seriously to be entertained; but many of his intimates at Brussels were leaning towards the reformed doctrines. Still, he remained as yet a Catholic, if not a profoundly devout one. That he was ambitious, in any base sense, must also in fairness be denied. Certainly he knew sufficient of the abilities of himself and of those around him to feel that he was the natural leader (as indeed his worldly position also marked him out to be) of an anti-monarchical movement. Yet, of carving out an empire

For himself there was no chance whatever, and military glory he not only did not desire but probably knew himself to be incapable of attaining. Should there be no great struggle in the Netherlands his present independence would mean the loss certainly of his influence, probably of his estates and possibly of his head. Should the struggle come it was inevitable that, in view of the large Catholic element in the population and the strength of the Spaniards, there would fall to his lot a life of hardships (which he never liked), financial ruin and maybe worse. Vulgar material desire of advancement, of the type indicated by Granvelle, would under the circumstances have been best satisfied had William crinkled to the King from the outset, stifled his reverence for liberty and his tolerant religious spirit, and set himself to gag assemblies and burn heretics with a will.

He was thoroughly honest and largely unselfish in his opposition to Philip; the methods of his resistance were not quite literally honest. "We needs must laugh a little in the presence of suffering," says a modern philosopher, "else how should we live our lives." If a certain amount of callousness is a brutality forced upon us by the brutality of nature, dissimulation is often a vice to which we are driven by other men's vices. William patently was, as Granvelle said, "sly". His profoundly loyal letters to Philip undoubtedly were to some extent written by him with his tongue in his cheek; although viewed from another standpoint they were worded as they were worded so as to leave the way open for reconciliation. But it has to be remembered that he knew Philip would read them with his tongue in his cheek, and he rightly held that the time for open defiance, should such ever be necessary, had not yet come. For the people of the Netherlands had not yet been goaded

to the point of revolt; even when he did take the field, in 1567, he was, it may well be argued, premature in his action. It was as yet desirable for both parties to be outwardly civil, although each knew, and each knew that the other knew, that each was acquainted, through stolen letters, with the other's half-formed plans. For the moment the fight was ostensibly raging not over the broad questions of religion and liberty, but over the person of one noxious, sleek and oily Man of God.

The tension became intolerable. Granvelle's inquisitors scoured the country, burning men, women and children, preachers, burghers and peasants. Valenciennes, Berghem's town, which had risen in 1562, rose again and expelled the torturers from its midst. Persecution drove the stubborn Netherlanders more and more into the arms of Protestantism. Wherever William and his fellows went, in village and city, they could not but be conscious of the appealing eyes of the people, could not but hear their encouraging murmurs. As their hopes swelled, Granvelle's shrank. In December, 1563, something happened which, superficially a matter of no importance, sealed, as things turned out, the Cardinal's fate.

Gaspar Schetz, Lord of Grobbendonck,¹ a politician-financier, liked and respected by every one, gave a dinner at which most of the nobles then in Brussels were present. With Granvelle still in the city, there was little need for the host to make conversation. As course by course and tankard after tankard was dispatched, the talk grew ever more excited and tumultuous. Complaints against Granvelle gave way to ridicule of Granvelle. What an upstart he was! What an

¹ He had previously been settled in business at Antwerp, where Gresham lodged with him. He and his brothers were called Gaspar, Melchior and Balthazar, after the three Kings who came from the East.

impostor! How preposterous and insolent were the pomp and magnificence wherewith he strove to outshine his betters! How disgusting the luxury of his household! The noise, intoxication and ribaldry of these abstemious and unostentatious young men increased until, finally, one of them was afflicted with a novel idea. Why, he cried, should they not protest against the sumptuousness of this vulgar Burgundian by clothing their households in the simplest imaginable style? A roar of applause and laughter smote the walls. "Agreed, agreed"—but who was to select the garb? Dice were brought out and all crowded together to cast for the honour. Egmont won.

The Count did his work thoroughly. Within a week his retainers streamed forth into Brussels in a costume of monastic severity; doublet, hose and long sleeves, all of rough grey cloth with but one trace of decoration. On each sleeve was embroidered a small design which might have represented a monk's cowl and might have represented a fool's cap, so was taken to represent both. The jest was precisely of the broad yet stinging kind that the Netherlanders loved, and it took amazingly. The people swarmed into the shops; merchants who kept the right frieze made fortunes; and the manufacture of grey cloth garments only ceased when the stocks of grey cloth ran out. Those teeming thousands with axe, faggot and rope busy in their midst broke into quenchless laughter against their persecutor. Even Margaret of Parma saw the joke—possibly because it was aimed at Granvelle. She thought, though, that the monk's cowl was an unnecessary touch, and persuaded the nobles to substitute for it a bunch of arrows symbolizing their union. With this device they exhibited themselves everywhere. Egmont actually wore dress, device and all, at the very table of the Regent. Had he never

done things less whole-heartedly than at that time he might never have stood upon a scaffold.

Granvelle bewailed this last outrage to Philip as a final sign of disloyalty. Philip was certainly convinced of that, but he was also convinced that the time had come for the Cardinal to go. Margaret's secretary Armenteros had been sent by her to Madrid months before to urge Granvelle's recall, and the Duchess was now repeating the request in every letter she wrote. Her task of governing was becoming impossible without the aid of Orange and Egmont, and she honestly did not believe that their characters were as bad as their priestly enemy had painted them. Philip for once realized that the inevitable was inevitable. In February, 1564, he wrote to Margaret telling her that he would think the matter over, and to the same effect to Orange and his comrades, commanding them also to return to the Council. But these letters were misleading; why so constructed it is not easy to say, unless, as the King's harsher judges have it, he conscientiously and consistently strove to tell as few truths as he could. In January, he had, in fact, already sent a message to the Cardinal giving him his *congé*. He was to go to Burgundy for a few days in order, not exactly to bury his grandmother but "to visit his mother". Granvelle, who was no coward, kicked a little. The three nobles refusing to return to the Council until he had gone, he tried to get Margaret to ignore them, so as to frighten them into submission to the royal orders. Intriguing availed him nothing; Orange and the others knew what was in the wind. Two months before, William in his usual cautious way had informed his brother Louis that: "Many things are happening which had better be told you by word of mouth than by letter for reasons that you wot of". Now, he was sure that Philip had abandoned

his tool and wrote freely: "He is certainly going," was his comment, again to the younger Nassau, "and I trust that we will go so far that he can never come back". Margaret, armed with fresh instructions from Madrid, insisted upon the Cardinal's immediate withdrawal. Popular feeling had reached fever height; the libellous screeds and costumes filled the streets. At last, on 13 March, Granvelle accepted the situation, issued from the courtyard of his palace with a splendid train of soldiers, household servants and carriages, and left the city by the Namur gate. No sooner was he out of sight of his domicile than a quippish fellow pasted a "For Sale" notice on its door. Those two madcaps, Brederoode and Hoogstraten, inebriated with rollicking glee, mounted a single horse and cantered along by the procession for miles, once clownishly halting abreast the Cardinal's carriage and glaring into his face. Perhaps the retiring statesman did not mind these boyish eccentricities. He was a little of a philosopher; besides, there must have been a world of filial emotion in his heart. He had not seen his mother for nearly twenty years.

The Netherlands never beheld him again. He continued from his delightful Burgundian retreat to protest his single-mindedness and altruism. "I would have lost my life for liberty," he wrote to Secretary Pave. Admitting that to be a slight over-statement it is due to him to say that he did not deserve quite all the hatred that the Netherlanders cherished for him, or all the obloquy which has been poured over him by historians. Desire for power and place at any price was his shining fault rather than any unusual malevolence, intolerance or cruelty. For years he cherished a hope of being sent back to the Provinces, believing that the storm of animosity against him would blow over in spite of the

warnings of friends who told him "the later you return the better". Vainly, however; when he was an old man Philip employed him on great business elsewhere, but he had no use for him in the Low Countries and, "until his beard grew to his waist" he remained in Burgundy with the scenery, the wine, and his parent.

When he had gone not a soul had a good word to say for him. "Everybody," ran William's news, "is delighted at the departure of that worthy Cardinal." Orange himself took the fortunate turn of events with his customary calmness, but the less restrained spirits displayed their hilarious joy most promiscuously. Mansfeld, for example, gave a crude pantomime wherein Granvelle as a hermit was trounced by the Devil; and the whole Netherlands shook its sides over the excellent waggery. Parmese Margaret herself, whose dislike of her whilom master had become intense, took pronounced pleasure in snubbing the few insignificant dependents of the Cardinal who remained behind. The woman who had begged for Granvelle a red hat now declared that all priests were irreclaimable villains. Her behaviour towards Orange, Egmont and Horn changed accordingly. "As soon as he had gone," runs a note of William's to the Landgrave of Hesse, "the Duchess of Parma, our Regent, asked us, as she had done before, if we would return to the Council; we agreed, stipulating that in the event of the Cardinal returning we should withdraw incontinently." She accepted their terms and lavished smiles upon them all. Philip, too, wrote them friendly letters, and as they took up the work of cleansing the administrative stable they saw, for a moment, a vision of a Netherlands loyal and contented in the near future. Egmont and Horn may have been dazzled, unbalanced by that vision; but William, although hopeful, could not forget that the smiles of Margaret did not

connote the confidence of Margaret's half-brother. That confidence, however clear the empyrean for the while, would be a difficult thing to win, especially as he himself was determined to sacrifice not a jot of his political principles, and Philip had never shown himself in the least degree capable of modifying his. Philip might change; judging from his mere written words, he had changed; but it was manifestly likely that he was merely biding his time before striking another blow. Men who were setting themselves to rehabilitate the liberties of the Provinces could scarcely afford to rely upon the democratic and tolerative enthusiasm of a persecuting autocrat. Before everything, if any semblance of stability was to be secured, it was necessary to place the constitution upon an impregnable basis, and William made the attainment of that end his primary objective.

He had a multitude of grievous private distractions. A vast burden of debt—he had certainly incurred it himself—made it impossible for him decently to keep up his position. He shed a melancholy smile over this hereditary Nassau tendency to exceed income: "So it was in the beginning," he told Louis, "is now and ever shall be, world without end". Also heresy in Orange was spreading; and between his disinclination to persecute or to offend his German relatives and his wish to win the trust of Philip and the Catholics, he scarcely knew what replies to make to the innumerable letters upon the subject which poured in upon him from every quarter: from the Pope, from France, from his lieutenants in Orange, from Hesse and from John Calvin himself. The decrees he did issue were too moderate either to repress the Protestants or to satisfy the Catholics; but even those might have lost him valuable friends. Anne of Saxony's folly, too, was a severe trial. She consorted with drunken nobles. Sometimes in whimsical

fits of temper, she refused to eat, ignoring her husband's remonstrances and shutting herself up in a taper-lit room for fortnights at a time. Perpetual mental stress was wearing him away. He grew thin, his handsome face became lined and prematurely old. It was whispered abroad that night after night he lay awake summoning the repose that would not come. But amid all these troubles William, never forgetting how much depended upon him, kept his heart up as best he could, and applied himself with unflagging energy to public affairs.

Surveying the recent history and present condition of the Netherlands he thought he saw three things of crucial importance for which he ought to work. Democratic control of finance and voice in general administration had gone. To restore these it was necessary to procure the convocation of the Estates-General of the Provinces. The ancient privilege of the native leaders to share executive power had been wrenched away by overbearing ministers; so larger and quite definite functions must be prescribed for the Council of State. Nothing could dam the tide of popular discontent as long as the episcopal courts continued to wield an authority categorically denied them by the traditional law of the land. The revocation of the edicts and the suppression of the inquisition were essential both to the peace of the country and, incidentally, to the peace of his own mind.

CHAPTER VI

MARGARET AND THE COMPROMISERS

VERY soon even the half-blind saw that the sky was heavily clouded. Margaret had fallen out of one rascal's hand into another. Orange watched, a helpless spectator, as her plebeian and unscrupulous secretary, Armenteros, gained a more absolute domination over her than ever Granvelle had had. The Prince's efforts to purge the administration of corruption could scarcely succeed when the Regent herself began to sell offices wholesale. Thus two of his three aims were speedily frustrated. With regard to the prospects of the last there was no certainty either way. In August, 1564, Philip commanded the Regent to promulgate throughout the Provinces the edicts of the Council of Trent, and to ensure their enforcement by courts, inquisitors and executioners. These most rigid decrees fixed doctrine, commanded absolute conformity to the creed thus stereotyped, enjoined the rigid excommunication (in the broad sense) of heretics, and placed the citizens' daily life under the closest ecclesiastical supervision. Previous edicts had been open to cavil even by the orthodox, but the Trent Council had been endowed with the useful property of infallibility, and nothing could have shaken Philip in his resolve to carry out its decisions literally. Feeble attempts were made by the Duchess to dissuade him on grounds of expediency, but neither she nor other remonstrators could extract from him any answer save the most evasive. In

his slow way he was planning the subjection of the Netherlands by a new army under Alva, and that grim Duke added fuel to his anger with his fiery speeches. "The letters of those lords," he swore to the King, "make me so furious that only by the greatest efforts of self-control can I prevent myself from appearing frenzied to your Majesty." Meanwhile Philip bode his time. The Prince of Orange whose loyalty, to any one save a fanatic, must seem absurdly great, still hesitated to break finally with the Spaniard. He shuddered at the appalling scenes which were being witnessed in Flanders where the inquisition butchers, fiendish Peter Titelmann at their head, were filling the prisons with harmless Protestants, and dragging hundreds of humble men and women to the stake. He realized, as he afterwards confessed, that the turn of the upper classes might come next. He made no secret of his belief that religious opinions should not subject men to persecution, that Cæsar had no business to interfere with the things that were God's. "It was his custom to say," writes Pontus Payen, a Catholic, "that in matters of religion God alone should inflict punishment." Yet he clung still to his Catholic faith and to the hope that armed strife in the Netherlands might be averted.

Conferences between Margaret and the nobles at the close of 1564 resulted in an agreement that Egmont must go to Spain to treat with Philip. When his instructions were debated in council William spoke out more strongly than ever before. In an oration lasting for several hours he declared for plain language in addressing the King. Philip should be made to understand, without minced words, that he must restore the liberties of the Provinces, that the powers of the council must be enlarged, that religious persecution must cease, and that the edict of Trent should never be put into

force in the free Netherlands. "How oppose," he cried,¹ 'the old placards of Charles V to the Huguenots of Tournay and Valenciennes who sing publicly the psalms of Marot, to these Protestants of Flanders who do not fear to hold almost daily preachings, to these Antwerp heretics who assault the state officers for taking a single apostate monk to the stake." The council was aghast at the fierceness of his tone. Viglius, for example, went home and had an apoplectic fit. Hopper, his temporary successor as president, and Margaret between them modified Egmont's instructions so as to embody, in a mild form, some of William's points. In January, 1565, Egmont was sped across the frontier by a disorderly mob of young aristocrats who signed a bond of union in their blood. William awaited his return anxiously, but he gravely doubted his stability.

The polite relations that still subsisted between William and his monarch about this time are well revealed by a letter (characteristically loosely written) to Prince from King dated 3 April, 1565.

"MY COUSIN,

"Since my master cook has died so that I want another who must be good and trustworthy and that I have heard that you have one named master Herman who serves you as chief cook and is, I am told, very good, and I do not doubt of his reliability since he is yours: you will do me a great pleasure if you send him to me as soon as you can. And he may be assured that he will have no reason to be dissatisfied with his treatment."

These compliments and favours were light froth on a scarcely agreeable gulf. The worst of Orange's fears concerning Egmont had been confirmed before this letter was delivered. On his arrival at Madrid the

¹Juste.

hero of St. Quentin had been received with pomp and circumstance. Philip, instructed of old by Granvelle, knew his man, and speedily perverted him by flattery. Egmont did not consciously betray his comrades; but his vanity made him an easy victim and by making a great show of friendship, chatting to him, driving with him, banqueting him, Philip soon sponged his memory clean of his instructions. Then he sent him back to Brussels with a message that the deluded envoy scarcely realized to be a mere confirmation of the existing state of things. Egmont returned to Brussels in April in his own words "the most contented man in the world," bringing with him the young Prince Alexander of Parma, afterwards celebrated. For a while Egmont, with an excellent opinion of his own performances, paraded the Provinces trumpeting Philip's "clemency". Then Orange, in a desperate effort to open his eyes, used (as Pontus Payen says) "biting words against the Count of Egmont that he had done nothing in Spain save fill his purse, and that the 50,000 pistoles that the King had given him had made him forget the purpose of his journey". The poor man was severely wounded in his pride, and for several months retired to his estates to brood over his wretchedness; but in the autumn he was back to rejoin Orange and the others in the renewed fight.

All the summer the Trent decrees had been nominally in force, but little more. Heretics had been executed in many places (drowned at midnight in cold tubs so as to be cheated of public martyrdom), but, generally speaking, the persecution had flagged. The inquisitors, some of whom had been made bishops, had dwindled in numbers and found that the governors and even the clergy would not help them in their bloody work. The murmurs of the common people had become so loud and

o threatening that the Government dared do nothing. n November, however, a final mandamus came from Philip. All suspected heretics must be apprehended, all convict prisoners put to death, and the Trent edicts published in every hamlet. To reeking Titelmann he indited an epistle of congratulation ; to Margaret and Egmont letters of a hortative stamp.

The people of Brussels heard the news and surged about their streets in a frenzy of excited anger ; and the nobles held dinners nightly, swearing to defeat the King. When the State Council debated the letters Orange saw his way clear at last. He spoke without passion. The King had made his will perfectly plain ; it now only remained for them to obey His Majesty's order and to publish the edicts every six months for an indefinite period. As the minute was recorded, William turned to his neighbour. " We are about," said he, with a flushed face, " to see the first act of a great tragedy." A month later, 24 January, 1566, he with his friends wrote to Margaret to resign office. These were the reasons which (from his house at Breda) he sent :—

" His Majesty wishes and very expressly commands that the placards made by his Majesty and by the late Emperor should be in all respects enforced and executed in all rigour. Madame, this seems to me very hard, for the placards are so many and so diverse that hitherto they have been generally limited and not carried out to the letter, even in times when the universal misery was not so intense as it now is, and when our people had not become so inclined to novelties owing to the encouragement and example of their neighbours. And to wish at once to use extreme measures and suddenly to renew the inquisition more ruthlessly than ever, I cannot, Madame, think that his majesty could gain anything by it save anxiety for himself and trouble for his

people ; and he would lose the affection of his good subjects, giving to all a suspicion that His Majesty is not going to rule as he has always promised to do."

Montigny, Berghem, young Mansfeld refused to put the edicts in force in their governments. Patriotic pamphlets were sown broadcast. Trade was almost suspended. Wheat was scarce and distress acute. Men's thoughts were turned upon the impending struggle to the exclusion of common mundane concerns. Hitherto, as Groen puts it, sedition had taken the mild form of "a few meetings of Knights of the Fleece and a few stormy debates in council" ; its form was now becoming more fully developed. William began to get into close touch with a clique of young revolutionary men of birth, who, after meetings at Spa and at a southern castle, where Montigny was being married, had in the Culemburg palace at Brussels, during young Parma's wedding-feast, been stirred into activity by a sermon from eloquent Francis Junius. These confederates had put into circulation a document known as the "Compromise," protesting against the inquisition and promising resistance. Ultimately it was signed by 2000 nobles and burghers, many of which latter (said the uncharitable) could not hold out against a chance of writing their names underneath those of their betters.

"Know," began the "Compromise," "all to whom these presents may come, that a swarm of foreigners caring naught for the safety or prosperity of this our country . . . have so wrought upon his Majesty with their wily persuasions and false reports that he has let himself be induced to will (against his oath and the hopes which we have always entertained) not only in no wise to soften the placards already issued concerning religion, but also to strengthen them, and

THE NETHERLANDS

THE UNION OF UTRECHT
1579

Provinces of the Union shaded
The towns underlined also
belonged to the Union



English Miles 0 50 100

D. Van der Waerden, Oxford

even to introduce in all its harshness the inquisition which is not only iniquitous and contrary to all law divine and human, surpassing the vilest barbarities practised aforetime by the tyrants, but will also bring a great dishonour upon the glory of God and total ruin and desolation upon all these Low Countries ; besides that, under the shadow of the false hypocrisy of certain persons, it will sweep away all order and police, abolish all right, enfeeble all the authority and value of the ancient laws, customs and ordinances . . . and make the people of this said country perpetual slaves of inquisitors, men of straw."

William never signed this "holy and lawful confederation and alliance," or even entirely approved of the actions of its signatories ("I beseech you not to do these things," he broke out when his brother was accused of writing a rebellious poster) ; but his fate was so closely bound up with theirs that some account of them is necessary.

The leaders of the league were (besides Mansfeld, who soon fell away from grace) Louis of Nassau, William's brother, Henry of Brederode and Philip de St. Marnix, Lord of St. Aldegonde, who is reputed to have drafted the "Compromise". Louis of Nassau, who had finally abandoned the placidity of Dillenburg for the turmoil of the religious fray, was at this time 29 years old. The love which subsisted between him and William might well be proverbial. But, save that both were of a spiritual temper and tolerant, brave and warm-hearted, there was little in common between their characters. William was the cautious statesman, old before his time ; Louis, the headstrong impulsive youth who could never grow old ; imprudent, generous, a chivalric hero of romance. A friend of such ill-balanced reprobates as Brederode, he touched pitch

without being soiled, remaining always high-spirited and genial without ever losing his self-control. Profoundly sincere in his religion, he cleaved to a Puritanism which never savoured of priggery, and disapproved of iconoclasm and the other excesses of the extreme reformers. In spite of all his loathing of tyranny he had qualms about resisting the King's will, only doing so in the end because he was convinced that God's supremest command was "that His Word should be preached". In person he was small, well-built and handsome; he had a poet's head, large keen eyes, curved eyebrows, long wavy hair brushed backward, pointed chin, and a merry smile. He was adored by the mob and by his fellow-leaguers, most of whom felt themselves unworthy of him. "I hope to die a poor soldier and faithful beggar at your feet," wrote feckless Brederode, and the feeling was shared by scores. On the field Louis was a brigade in himself; he would kneel in his tent, say his mother's prayers, then sally forth and, conscious that he had never embraced a bad cause, fight with titanic strength and courage. With his spirituality and his humour he became later William's greatest support during the war against Spain. But his indiscretions were often a source of embarrassment.

St. Aldegonde was, in some respects, an equally noble figure. He had brilliant literary, theological and oratorical gifts, gifts which mark him the John Milton of the young Dutch commonwealth. As a soldier he was second to none of his companions, and his patriotism, integrity, and granite firmness of purpose—saving only for one short period later when melancholia overcame him—were those of a Hebrew prophet. But in point of religion he was a Calvinist of the narrowest kind. He hated the Catholics as much as the Catholics hated him, and was no more prepared to tolerate them than they

to tolerate him. He remained at Orange's side through all the years of the Prince's long struggle when most of the other earlier leaguers had died, recanted or drifted into obscurity.

Henry of Brederode, lineal descendant of the ancient Counts of Holland, was a man of entirely different stamp, and yet like the other two, distinctly a type of a section of men who were now banding themselves together against the despotism. He was physically strong, fine of feature and debonair of carriage, warm-hearted, and popular; but shallow and unreliable to a degree. His drinking feats won him laurels even in that hard-drinking age; at times they brought him near death, and in the end his vices ruined him. Foresight he lacked entirely, his ideas of conducting a patriotic agitation were childish, he embarrassed his friends by his ludicrous public exhibitions of buffoonery and debauchery. Yet he was undeniably attractive, and, to judge by his worship of Louis and his reverence for William, hankered after good if he did not pursue it. Although high political ideals were beyond his range of perception, he had a healthy hatred for the inquisitors and smooth-faced ecclesiastics who oppressed the people. Above all he had a quaint, broad humour which must have been a source of very great delight to his more intellectual correspondents and companions. Louis of Nassau had in August, 1565, been ill. Brederode wrote to him expressing the hope that he was both better and drinking stoutly. "For me," he continued, "I think I am not good enough to die and God would not know what to do with me—but at all events don't drink too much water, for one drowns in it." Very picturesque was his phraseology and his criticism very blunt. "Necessity makes the sow to trot," observed Brederode when the Duchess was forced to listen to the nobles' complaints;

and again, "I will do my duty in spite of all the race of the red sow". His zoological terms were not reserved entirely for the porcine Princess. Of the men of the robe and the surplice he assured Louis that he wished "the race of bishops and presidents were extinct, like green dogs". François Villon, who constructed in his rainbow imagination a hundred vile compounds wherein his enemies' tongues ought to be fried, would have admired another of Brederode's outbursts. "The gallant Morillon," he told Louis, "bestowed on me one day at Viglius' table the name of Antichrist. I wished them both with their filthy satellites and companions in the house of Couteran. My God! the fine fire that would have made! My only fear would have been that the smoke of it might have been so infected with the distillations of the frizzling of such foul carcasses of men that those who were overtaken by it would have all had the plague; for such a poison would have carried a very long way." Even his devotion to his idol Louis must needs be put in absurd language: "For your sake I would go 1000 leagues beyond the Indies". Other leaders there were, Nicholas de Hammes ("Golden Fleece"), St. Aldegonde's brother Tholouse, Dolhain and wild Robert de la Marck, Lord of Lumey, descendant of the "Wild Boar" of the Ardennes; but these were the chief.

Within a few months of its framing the Compromise was supported by 2000 signatures, and Brederode and his friends began to rear their necks. Orange, as has been said, never appended his name to it; nor did the other great magnates and Councillors of State. Probably, cool heads as they were, they preferred to wait upon events. But it is unquestionable that in their cautious way they executed flank movements in aid of the leaguers' frontal attack. Orange's retirement

from office and vigorous protest to the Duchess have already been mentioned. Berghem and Meghem—the latter afterwards became an apostate—imitated his example, declaring that they would not be used as instruments of religious persecution. Egmont, a whipped dog after his criminal weakness of the preceding year, was eager to atone for past errors, and Montigny rained remonstrances upon Margaret. For her, she was on the margin of despair. The execution of heretics—50,000 perhaps, since Charles put his hand to the bloody plough—had but stimulated the spread of the obnoxious tenets. Sedition was in the common air, for strange and ominous rumours were abroad. “They say,” Margaret warned Philip, “that your Majesty is coming with regiments of Spaniards and Germans and will build forts and suchlike”; and the military preparations over the border of sinister Eric of Brunswick were noised abroad. The crops had partially failed; commerce was almost suspended, half the few vessels which sailed out of the Scheldt were emigrant ships. With Philip urging repressive measures without providing the sinews of repression, what could a poor Regent do?

William of Orange also was in difficulties. The alternatives faced him of openly championing a movement which would probably fail, or of keeping aloof from a movement which might possibly succeed. He adopted a middle course which was only relatively a safe one and which, for the very reason that it was a middle course, would have to be abandoned sooner or later, both parties maintaining the doctrine that “he who is not for us is against us”. William refused to allow the Compromisers to use his name or to regard him as one of themselves, but he mingled with them in order as far as possible to moderate not their zeal but their indiscretion and violence. In February, 1566, numbers of them

arrived at Breda, where he entertained them. De Hammes and Brederode (Louis of Nassau was absent but sympathetic) urged immediate insurrection. They were sick of fighting "infamous wolves" with paper and ink. The Prince who knew that bleeding hearts and boiling blood do not constitute a complete military (or political) equipment, checked their frenzies. He invited Horn, Egmont, Montigny, Hoogstraten and other friends to come and meet these turbulent sprigs. At first the two bodies of men found it difficult to confer; the great nobles were all Catholics and, within sane limits, loyalists, and they had a comprehensible, if not angelic, distaste for a policy initiated by their juniors and inferiors. Orange, with consummate tact, contrived in part to span the chasm. The whole concourse moved to Hoogstraten's seat, then back to Breda; and the chief notables, excepting wavering Egmont and deserting Meghem, agreed that the leaguers should draw up a petition to the Duchess, Orange stipulating that it should be presented without any show of force. Louis, Brederode, and their friends dispersed in order to stir up popular feeling on their own behalf in the Provinces. William (27 March, 1566) went to Brussels, whither the Duchess had been frantically summoning him for several weeks.

A council sitting was held on the 29th, Orange, whose resignation had not been accepted, attending. Scarcely had business commenced when he was astonished, and Margaret horror-struck, to hear Meghem, with Egmont's shameful corroboration, aver that the heretics were about to rise, aided by a large foreign army, unless the inquisitors were immediately suppressed. These gentlemen were in favour of moderating the religious tyranny, but they stigmatized as rebellious the terms of the petition which, as they informed Margaret, was about to be thrust upon her. An excited debate ensued.

The Regent was afraid of the petitioners on the one hand and of her brother on the other. Should she receive them? What would he say if she did receive them? Meghem and Aremberg urged her neither to admit them to her presence nor to accept their impudent petition. Berlaymont, practical statesman, was of opinion that she ought to let the scoundrels in, surround the house with troops, and then have them all massacred. Both courses, calmly counselled William of Orange, were insane. Besides, the right of petition was traditionally accorded to all citizens, and the Duchess of Parma would be enthroning no precedent by recognizing it. He persuaded the trembling woman to resist her impulse to fly and to take his advice. Government tactics decided upon, William sent Louis a last word regarding the tactics of the other side. "They say you are coming armed, and I know well that you are not, but if any should appear carrying weapons, make them lay them aside; for the more peaceably you come, the better." Knowing the foibles of Brederode and his like he added a warning against letting off salvos either outside or inside the walls.

The leaguers rode into Brussels on 2 April, amid the welcoming shouts of a vast throng which pressed along with them from the city gate to the Nassau palace, where the procession broke up. On the night of the 3rd, William of Orange, Horn, and Mansfeld met secretly to discuss the crisis. Horn urged that they should all send their Golden Fleece collars back to Philip, and Orange inclined to the idea. Mansfeld was adverse, and nothing was decided. On the 5th, the presentation of the "Request" took place. Three hundred nobles, mostly young, dressed for the occasion (with an eye to the fitness of things) in grey frieze, lined up on foot, four by four, outside the Cuylenburg mansion in the

Carré du Petit Sablon. A little lame man, Philip de Bailleul, led the van, and Brederode and Louis of Nassau, arm in arm, brought up the rear. Bearing themselves proudly amidst the cheering crowds, they marched regularly up the street which led to the hill-top whereon stood the ducal palace.

Inside the pillared council-chamber, Margaret, gorgeously dressed, sat on a throne, waiting. The light streamed in upon her from the diamond panes of a great armorial window, and tears sparkled in her eyes. William, with his fellow councillors, stood at her side, watching her distress and pondering over the pregnancy of the coming interview. Shortly after noon the tense silence was broken by the announcement that the petitioners had arrived at the great Gothic gateway of the outer hall. Margaret's lips trembled the order to admit them. The little group around the throne heard their footsteps on the stone pavement and then the foremost came in, Brederode who had hurried up from the rear leading and carrying the Request, says a contemporary Englishman, in the form of "a little painted booke". He bowed, and in respectful terms sketched the objects of the deputation; and Margaret commanded that the Request be read. He read it. It was a far more moderate document than the Compromise. It opened with a profession of loyalty. Those who had alleged that the petitioners were conspiring against the Sovereign were liars and deserved drastic treatment. What was really desired was to deliver His Majesty from the onset of a rebellion provoked by the unbearable inquisition. Such rebellion was becoming likelier daily, and the Duchess would be well-advised in suspending the inquisition and advising the King to do away with it and to summon the States-General.

What were William's thoughts as he heard the

familiar demands repeated, as he watched his brother and his friends bearding the lioness in her den, as he heard the murmurs of the vast crowd outside and, in imagination, those of the still vaster one all over the Provinces, from Limburg to Holland, from Artois to Groningen, in market and dock and field, which was awaiting the fruit of this momentous meeting? His heart must have been heavy, his perplexity immense indeed. Here were Protestants defying a Catholic Power; he was a Catholic. Here were seditious men contemplating war; he shrank from bearing arms against his lawful Sovereign. Yet the inquisition must go, the liberties of the Provinces must be restored; and if the King did not give way, as he would not, and as Granvelle, Alva, and, save when she was panic-stricken, Margaret encouraged him not to do, what was there for it but war? He himself was standing beside the Duchess as her counsellor, the principal of her servants and assistants. But he could not but feel that, with some of his closest friends among the throng behind Brederode, and with the memory of his own past recalcitrance fresh, Margaret must associate him rather with the petitioners than with herself. In his mind's eye he could survey the whole recent history of that oppressed country, the moans of martyrs smiting the sky, thousands of homes made ruinous, rotting ships, decaying industries, misery, desolation and death. At times he had half-thought revolt to be inevitable; he had mused incomplete schemes for systematizing such revolt, tentatively fishing for German, French, English support. Surely the dramatic scene now being acted before him must have made ring in his ears—albeit he resolutely strove to stop them to such sounds—words such as the “You, you, you,” of Philip seven years before.

Brederode's long recital ended. Scarcely able to speak for her tears, Margaret murmured that she and her council would consider the Request and temper the present application of the edicts. Then she gave the sign of dismissal, and one by one the 300 stepped up to her chair, made a low reverence, and passed out of the chamber, through the great hall, down the steps and into the road. No sooner had they gone than the distressed and angry Duchess turned to her councillors. What should she do with these rebellious men? "They are not rebellious men," protested William. He urged that the leaguers were of as good blood as any in the land, that they knew the intensity of prevalent feeling, that they were not moved by selfish considerations and that their Request deserved very careful study. Egmont, vacillating as usual, mumbled something about having the gout. Meghem broke into invective against the Compromisers, Aremberg pleaded for their immediate expulsion from the city, but it was left to Berlaymont to give the most memorable piece of advice. "How, madam!" he expostulated, "surely you are not in fear of these beggars (*ces gueux*)? By the living God, he who should take counsel from me would comment on their Request with a great scourge and send them away more quickly than they came." To apply "belles bastinades" to 300 noblemen who had the populace behind them was out of the question. So next day the Regent informed Brederode that she would endeavour to get Philip to accede to the Request. She had not the power to suspend the inquisition, but she promised to command the inquisitors to "go easy" for a while. On 8 April Brederode and some comrades returned to the palace, thanked her for something she had not conceded (i.e., the cessation of persecution) and pledged themselves to help the Government maintain

the old religion. Margaret received this calmly, and sturdily refused to set it on record that the leaguers had been guilty of no disloyal act. Time, she said, would show.

That night William dined at Mansfeld's with Egmont and Horn—all thoughtful enough no doubt. After dinner the three friends (Mansfeld was indisposed) rose and, as there was to be a late session of the council at the palace, went out. The 300 confederates were banqueting at Cuylemburg's palace, and William thought that as the feast would probably be a rather boisterous one, it would be as well to go and fetch away Hoogstraten who was due at the council meeting. They went through the dark streets to the Cuylemburg residence, entered, and stood in the doorway of the dining hall.

The uproar within was astounding. Drunken men were dancing round and over the tables, laughing, spilling wine, pledging each other "by salt, by bread, and by wallet". Brederode and other champions of liberty rolled about with their coats inside out, bellowing with mirth and waving wooden bowls full of liquor. As soon as the roisterers perceived the new-comers there was a deafening shout. They crowded round William and his companions, and pressed wine upon them. "Drink," cried the inebriated heroes, "drink to the King and the Beggars." Puzzled a little, perhaps, the three councillors obeyed. Why the wallets, the wooden bowls? But in a moment everything was clear to them. Berlaymont's sneer had stuck. "Les Gueux" had responded to their name.

The Prince's party did not stay, although pressed to do so. In two or three minutes they detached Hoogstraten and departed, first having persuaded Brederode to put an end to the orgie. They went on to the palace

and got Margaret's thanks for having quelled the disorder. Afterwards their presence at this banquet was made one of the worst charges against them!

In a day or two Brussels was full of the noble Beggars, in grey doublet and hose (the colour had been seen in the streets before), disgraceful hats and beggars' wallets and bowls slung across their shoulders. They wore medals inscribed, "Faithful to the King even to beggardom," shaved their beards and grew their moustaches. When they dispersed Brederode, who left on the 10th with Cuylemburg and Berghem, made a sort of triumphal progress from Brussels to Antwerp where, standing at a window in the presence of an enormous concourse of people, he swore to defend the national liberties, and drank, as sign of good faith, a huge draught from his mendicant's basin. William was a little saddened by these antics, feeling that the house of Netherlandish liberty would require for its foundations something a little more substantial than tankards. The headstrong behaviour of these Beggars, he feared, might precipitate the final conflict with despotism before, by alliances and the storage of funds and trained men, the reformers had put themselves in a position to bring such a conflict to a successful issue. His own situation was made thrice more difficult by the rashness of friends whom he could not disown, for his adversaries saw to it that Philip should receive, with embellishments, circumstantial accounts of the leaguers' acts, and that in Madrid an Orange should be regarded but as an abler, craftier, and more dangerous Brederode.

CHAPTER VII

THE RIPENING FOR REVOLT

ALL that summer the Protestants showed more and more hardihood. Margaret was afraid of them. The "Grand Geus" jovial Brederode had shown what the Netherlanders could do. "Holland," he wrote in June, "is full of good beggars," and the confederates were in high spirits. Psalm-singing and preaching were universal. North and south congregations, thousands strong, streamed into the fields to hear sermons by men like the noble Peregrine de la Grange, Francis Junius, and learned Ambrose Wille. Gentlemen, merchants, artisans, peasants, they marched out in the broad light of day bearing whatever arms they possessed, and the Government was without force to quell them. At Antwerp a day after an official proclamation had been issued forbidding attendance at the preachings upon pain of death "went out of the towne to the sermone above xvi thousand persons all with their wepons in battal array". At Amsterdam, Utrecht, and many other large towns the dissenters did not even take the trouble to go outside the city walls to offer God their blasphemous praises. "The vermin," as a faithful Catholic wrote, "lift up their heads and put forth their horns." Really they had little solid justification for boldness, as the Government had neither made concessions nor intended to do so. Margaret, however, got the Knights of the Fleece and the States Council to draw up a scheme of "Moderation". Philip after much pres-

sure from her had consented to abolish the inquisition. God knew, he wrote, that shedding human blood was the thing of all things he wished to avoid. Later, in August, he secretly ordered Requesens at Rome to tell the Pope that his abolition of the inquisition was a mere form, "for I had rather lose all my states and a hundred titles (if I had them) than be master of heretics".

Still the "Moderation" was drawn up. The herd, with its usual insight, called it "Murderation," as, in spite of its fifty-three ostensibly pacificatory clauses, the long and the short of it was that the inquisition should remain as it was, except that future martyrs should be allowed the privilege of being hanged instead of burnt. Several of the provincial States approved of the plan, and Berghem and Montigny were nominated as envoys to go to Philip to get his consent to it, Egmont having refused. These two were Catholics, loyalists, and honest men, but they knew that Granvelle had poisoned his master's mind against them and went to Spain trepidant. Their mission was even more dangerous than they feared. They did not know that the Duchess was fortifying the King in his bigotry. They were not aware that one of Philip's agents in Brussels had named them to him as the prime movers of the discontents. They never suspected that at that very moment the Archbishop of Sorrento, who had come to Brussels on a pretence of seeing William of Orange, was helping Margaret to devise ways and means for re-establishing the inquisition and the edicts at their worst. Had all these things been open to them they would not have gone. To return they never had an opportunity.

For William, the comfort of his circumstances did not increase. Philip, whom he knew to be planning his death, sent him flattering letters urging him to crush

heresy. To a certain extent he was not unwilling to do that: he was (so to say) a Whig, and objected to mob-rule. That very fact inclined him to Lutheranism; but the bulk of the Netherland Nonconformists were Calvinistic. Although Armenteros was right when in 1566 he intimated to Philip that the Prince had at last ceased to be a Catholic, it was equally certain that he was not yet a Protestant. He was a politician, not a religionist, and, as far as the strife of creeds was concerned, he dreamt of a regime of tolerance in the shade of which lions and lambs might lie peacefully together. This was his ideal: he always maintained that belief could not be induced by the application of force; and when, in July, he consented to go to his city of Antwerp in response to the prayers both of Antwerp itself and of the Regent, he thought he might be able to check revolutionary excesses and frame a working arrangement in accordance with which the rival sects might worship side by side. Yet, as he went, his mood was a gloomy one. The Duchess, he knew, had come to hate him. What her attitude was, as seen by him, is evident from his statement that he refused to go to Antwerp if Egmont accompanied him, certain that "for all the evil which might come I should be blamed, and if anything good happened my companion would get the credit for it". Arriving at the city he was greeted by a great shouting multitude headed by Brederode who let off a fusillade of joyful pistol shots. "Long live the Beggars," cried some; others, "You are our viscount, our saviour"; but others, Calvinists, with shrewdness, "He is bringing us the Augsburg Confession". The Prince sternly expressed his disapproval of these demonstrations, and ordered the preaching of reformed doctrines to be confined to the suburbs. But he was impotent to control the tide of events. His brother and 1500 cavaliers met at St.

Trond, drunk, indulged in "an exchange of vociferations," agreed to raise 4000 German horse and forty companies of foot, and drew up a new petition to Margaret. William persuaded them to tone down its blatancy, but it was patent that Margaret could not consent to accept the Compromisers as practical colleagues in the Government. Orange, in fact, however qualified to be an arbitrator, to solve the problem of the Provinces, was helpless when not only one party but both parties in the struggle were obviously intractable and in no temper for mutual concessions.

Any doubts he may have had as to his utter helplessness were soon resolved. The Regent, who was dissatisfied with his mildness of action, summoned him to the capital and very reluctantly he resigned himself to departure from Antwerp and made his arrangements accordingly.

The city, with its population of 100,000, half of them Protestants, was in a ferment. Calvinists, Anabaptists and Lutherans—the port had a close trade connexion with Germany—detesting each other were united in their detestation of the Catholics; and this was intensified by persistent rumours that Eric of Brunswick and Meghem were organizing levies to attack the field-gatherings. Already, it is alleged, the Catholic clergy had been terrified by a grim though scarcely serious bill which had been affixed to their residences proclaiming: "The Word of God commands that the priests and monks should be massacred and these wicked scoundrels of canons hanged". On 18 August William with his wife and brother went to the town hall and sat at an upper window. It was the day of the annual procession of the Virgin. "Mayken's" devotees were carrying her huge painted image along the street with banners and music, whilst a turbulent horde (mainly followers of Calvin who had preached

against "a religion of idols") ran along around and behind them, volleying them with rude jests and missiles more substantial. "Molly" got back to her gorgeous Cathedral without material damage and William, although still uneasy, concluded that the worst ground for disturbance had been weathered and left Antwerp the next day.

He had been gone but a few hours when a crowd began to assemble around the cathedral. They wanted to see "Molly". Their humour was tickled by the discovery that the priests had hidden her high in the choir, and they ambulated in and out of the edifice exchanging jokes. "Molly's frightened. She's gone into hiding," they grinned. The affair might have ended at that with no harm done had not it entered the evil brain of a ribald pauper to scale the pulpit and there roll his eyes and mouth ecclesiastical platitudes with parentheses not devoid of breadth. The listeners were affected in various ways; some were shocked, some gave cheers for the Beggars. There was a rush for the pulpit and a general scuffle, but in a few minutes the priests managed to clear the ruck out. Excitement still simmered and all day the inefficient magistrates talked. Their inaction encouraged the disorderly, and on the morrow the mob returned to the cathedral, found the great doors open and flocked in. It was ripe for mischief and a very small spark sufficed to fire the magazine. Some of the merrymakers began to jeer at an old woman who sold candles. The crone grew wrathful and retaliated by "throwing dust, cinders and ordure in the faces and eyes of the aforesaid fellows". A scramble and a fight ensued, and soon pandemonium reigned in the Gothic spaces of the beautiful great building. The margrave came, saw, and was ejected. Paroxysms of anger shook the rabble. "Assisted by devils" they broke the Blessed

Virgin into a hundred pieces. They smashed every bench in the building. Raising ladders against the pillars and walls they tore down pictures, ornaments, crucifixes, and smashed them to atoms, completing their work by flinging stones through the rich old stained windows, cursing and blaspheming the while. Twilight coming, the ghoulish fanatics lit torches and danced about with leaping red flames casting great shadows over the walls and remote roof. The organs came to pieces. The holy oil vessels were emptied and boots greased with the contents. The libraries were ransacked; the ancient manuscripts *battered* and burnt. The resources of sacrilege exhausted in the cathedral—they plundered nothing—they left and repeated the scene in church after church. There were no great number of them and as they hurried through the streets the townsmen stood quietly “before their dores in harness looking upon these fellows passing from church to church”. Next Sunday Hermann Modet, a Calvinist minister, preached in dismantled Notre Dame itself.

News of these doings soon spread beyond the city. The idea of iconoclasm was epidemic. In Flushing, Middleburg, Mechlin, Ghent, Breda, in nearly every town in the Netherlands churches were sacked, images broken, and the magnificent works of mediæval painters and sculptors who had wrought to the glory of God damaged beyond repair. Always—so genuinely was this outbreak a “religious” one—robbing and violence to persons were conspicuously absent,¹ although, to give

¹ They hanged in Flanders a man who hid five shillings worth, saying they “came nott to steal but to spoyl that was against God”. Similarly in our Peasants’ Revolt another Achan who looted a vessel from John of Gaunt’s burning palace was thrown into the flames by his comrades, who were “seekers of truth and justice, not thieves or robbers”. Swift ought to have written his jocularly promised tract: “A Defence of the Proceedings of the Rabble in All Ages”.

an example, no less than four hundred buildings were invaded in Flanders alone. Margaret was in no frame of mind to analyze the nature of the plague. All she knew was that Brussels' turn might come next; all she feared, that an attempt might be made against her own person. Unwilling to trust the one man who might have calmed the storm she was seized with panic and decided upon flight to Mons. But whilst her clothes and furniture, her men-servants and her maid-servants were being collected, old President Viglius, rustling with fear, brought tidings that the citizens of Brussels had closed the gates to prevent her exit. Orange, who had—as indeed had Louis and the confederates—a rooted distaste for popular disorder, especially in the form of iconoclasm, joined with Egmont and Horn in urging on the Duchess the necessity of remaining at her post. Had the Prince at this time definitely decided to rebel, this would have been for him a rare opportunity, as national excitement was at its height and the capital was his if he cared to take it. But he did not yet see his way clear, and that being the case, it was as well to cling to duty, in the conventional sense, however unexciting and thankless it might be. He supported constitutional authority, therefore, although it was not easy to conceal his contempt for the quaking Regent who leant on him in the hour of danger whilst never ceasing to warn her brother that he was a traitor.

A week's reports of Protestant pillage brought the Duchess thoroughly to her knees. So general had been the upheaval that people thought that the end of the old Church had certainly come; monks and nuns, for instance, married in scores. Margaret, brought up in a school which did not allow the precision of its calculations to be endangered by the intrusion of the indefinite factor of pity, found it hard to believe that the reformers

if they broke loose in Brussels, would not imitate their opponents by shedding blood, perhaps her blood. She expressed her willingness to grant the right of public worship to a party which appeared strong enough to exercise it without permission. A rapid interchange of letters between herself and Louis of Nassau resulted in the agreement known as the "Accord," signed on 25 August, 1566. The inquisition was to be no more, and Protestant services were to be allowed in those places where they had already been held. The reformers, on their part, promised to dissolve their confederacies and to join loyally in the work of government. News of this compact led to rejoicings all over the country. The Netherlands felt a thrill of hope; but William of Orange no longer suffered from delusions.

Philip, after listening to Montigny and Berghem for some months, had already authorized Margaret to make some sort of concessions—privately registering, before a commissioner of oaths, the fact that he did not mean a word of it. The Duchess, however, shivered to think what he would say when he heard of the image-breakings and the Accord. She wrote to tell him that she was "eating her heart out for his advent," and protested that only under compulsion had she signed the Accord, giving him a quite superfluous reminder that he need not consider himself bound by that convention. The usual items of scarifying information followed: Orange was scheming for empire, Egmont was raising troops in Germany, Horn wanted to massacre Catholics, and all three had forsaken God. Very possibly the foolish woman believed in all these tales, but their falsehood is most evident. Philip tore his beard as he read them, swearing "by the soul of my father it shall cost them dear"; but even at that moment Orange was back at Antwerp, restoring order and punishing rioters. Horn

was doing similar service at Tournay, and Egmont, whose Catholicism was as untarnished as the Pope's, was actually thinking of crushing the Reformers by arms and was executing Flemish image-breakers and heretics by the dozen.

Each of the three great nobles did his duty according to his lights, and got his guerdon in the shape of increased suspicion. William's crime was that he did not massacre; his misfortune that he was too clear-sighted to believe the massacre could annihilate a living faith which had won wide dominion. Where he felt repressive measures both desirable and effective, namely, as towards the image-breakers who were enemies of society, he used them. It has been said¹ that he objected to them because "they upset the stubborn and prudent calculations of the Prince of Orange". That may be admitted to be in a sense true as long as it is remembered that he objected to them for other and less personal reasons as well, and that even at this date his "stubborn and prudent calculations" had not taken the form of an ordered and four-square plan which was undermined by the precipitancy of the iconoclasts. At all events he allowed the magistrates of Antwerp to mete out a heavy penalty to these latter. After that he drew up religious by-laws for the city with the Accord as basis. His letter to the Duchess, dated 28 August, 1566, is terse:—

"Madame,—This morning in my presence they hanged and strangled in the market-place of this town an Englishman, a Frenchman of Liégeois, and another of Bois le Duc, for having committed sacrilege and been plunderers of churches; and three others who were suspected of the same have been banished. Other evildoers will be terror-stricken

¹ Lavissee and Rambaud, "Histoire Générale".

lest the same torture of death should overtake them also. To-morrow, please God, we shall make all the necessary arrangements for reopening the churches and restoring divine service."

The Protestants had secured possession of three churches within the walls, and William confirmed them in tenancy, stipulating, in the interests of order, that they must refrain from annoying the Catholics by singing psalms in the streets. He had carried out the Accord to the letter. Margaret, though she expressed dissatisfaction that the heretics had been allowed anything more than the bare right to preach, assured him that she was pleased with him, and that, were she ever otherwise, she would tell him plainly the reasons for her displeasure. As will be seen, he was undeceived by these compliments, but for the time being he pursued his appointed task. Louis was at Breda, his other friends scattered about the country, only his ill-tempered (and, long ere this, suspected) wife was with him; and he worked night and day to make his local settlement as firm as might be, if permanence could be hoped for, reinforcing the garrison and quelling street brawls in his proper person. Concurrently he advised Louis how to act at Breda. He must allow preaching, but should also "make some demonstration, not only in the town but also in those villages where disturbances have taken place. Perhaps they will then have reason to be quieter in future." Curiously enough, the most stringent measures he ever took on behalf of Government were the last fruits of decaying loyalty. Even as he did the work he feared that it would be useless. He and Louis both told Wotton that "they feared the king was nothing content with either of them for their proceedings heere". Margaret's daily letters became, under their veneer of

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JULIANA, MOTHER OF WILLIAM THE SILENT
FROM A PORTRAIT AT DELFT

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civility, daily more reproachful. The king, William knew well, was merely maturing a master-stroke which should cut away the last traces of religious and political liberty in the Netherlands and drive himself and his fellows to exile or death. In his journey along the difficult track whereon obedience to despot and fidelity to principle were yoked together he had reached an impasse. Honest observation of the Accord would result in the maintenance of peace and the restoration of prosperity ; but Philip meant to tear the Accord into shreds, and no power on earth, least of all the power of reason, would avail to shake his determination. Even had William, in moral relapse, been willing to fall back into subservience and hang, hew, and burn at his master's orders, it was too late to do so. Philip would have used his tool and would then have broken it. Unreflective loyalty was doubly impossible ; on the other hand, the kind of loyalty he had professed for the last eight years had become impossible too. Past lack of success had proved it futile, and the military preparations in Spain made its continued practice absurd. With his integrity and tolerance of spirit his own nature was bound to drive him into rebellion sooner or later. His grasp of the characters and forces at work around him made it clear to him that external circumstances also left him no option but to rebel or, throwing up all, to seek a pauper's refuge abroad.

But to say, as Motley does, that "here began his treasonable thoughts," is to attach an arbitrarily narrow meaning to the term "treasonable". William, as has been seen, had dallied with treason for years, and had done his best to prepare the ground both at home and elsewhere in readiness for a possible crisis. Protestant nobles had been fighting for their lives in Germany, in France, and in England ; they might well have to do

so in Holland, and if they did, he would have to be on the Protestant side. His earliest negotiations with the German princes have been mentioned. Later, in August, 1564, he had expressed a hope that peace would be made between Sweden and Denmark so that, if necessary, the captain of mercenaries, George von Holl, would be free to come and fight in the Low Countries. In January, 1566, he had told Louis :—

“ Drink Schwarzenburg and von Holl a good draught for me, assuring them that they have no better friend than I, and that I only desire to do them service. The more secretly you can manage all this business the better.”

All through 1566 he was trying to ensure supplies of soldiers from the Germans, and shortly after his return to Antwerp in August he gave a dinner to Sir Thomas Gresham and sounded him (getting little out of that discreet man) as to the chances of help from Elizabeth of England. His hopes regarding another quarter are revealed by a letter dated “ Antwerp, August 1st, 1566,” and written to Louis, who had been intriguing with the French Huguenots, Condé and Coligny :—

“ My brother, I dreamed all last night that you were all Frenchmen. I could not shake off the dream until I got up. I hope this means that good news is coming ; nevertheless be on your guard. It seems to me our whole cause depends on Madame’s reply, all of which I will send later.”

To the extent of keeping himself ready for emergencies, therefore, William had certainly, in Pontus Payen’s words, been “ contrefaisant le regnard ”—counterfeiting the fox—for many years. But it is correct to say that it was at this point that he realized the game of compromise

to be up, and set himself to frame and pursue a policy which reckoned the Government not as an obstinate friend but as a relentless enemy.

It was desirable to have some Netherland allies more reliable and more influential than the young confederate nobles. The league, after the signing of the Accord, had gone to pieces and many of its component members had been busy destroying their own reputations. Brederode was apparently trying to satisfy an ambition to have been drunk at least once in every town in the Netherlands. Cuylenburg was pulverizing images and feeding his parrot upon holy wafers. De Hammes had gone abroad as captain of an Imperial regiment. The rest—St. Aldegonde, Louis of Nassau, Treslong, Dolhain and their friends, were slender machines for the engineering of a revolution. The obvious helpers for William were Egmont and Horn, his "brothers of the Fleece". The former especially, brilliant, famous, and a popular idol, would make just the fascinating figurehead for a movement of which William might be the brain. Both the Counts were known to be discontented. Horn had been reduced to poverty by his expenses in the royal service, and his reward, as he knew from his brother Montigny in Spain, was the suspicion of Regent and King. Egmont was piqued at the confidence Margaret was reposing in Assonleville, Viglius, Berlaymont and other men for whom he had a profound contempt. Madame was treating him, he complained, "as though I were a man of whom she had a low opinion". These things in mind, William and Louis sent their faithful gentleman, Varich, to Egmont with detailed instructions as to what he should say. The Count must be made to realize the critical nature of the situation and the need for strong and immediate action. The King was, he was to be reminded, preparing armies—

“of which not only those of the religion are suspicious but also the Catholics, fearing that his Majesty wishes to put them into the long threatened servitude, out of which may spring a disorder which will not easily be quelled. And tell him openly that the Prince thinks that his Majesty and the Council will be glad, under the pretext of religion, to put the country, ourselves and our children, into the most miserable slavery ever seen . . . so we must not let the grass grow under our feet.”

Egmont, narrowly Catholic and steeped in a mediæval conception of loyalty, hesitatingly consented to an interview. He and Horn met William, Louis, and Hoogstraten at Termonde on 3 October, 1566. The Nassaus exposed with unanswerable logic the King's plan to crush provinces and nobles together. Egmont heard Louis' passionate appeals to his manhood; he read a letter (probably forged but by no means misleading) from Alava, Spanish ambassador in Paris, asserting that Philip meant to take vengeance upon the three great nobles. But both he and Horn were deaf to reason and blind to fact. All they knew was that they were not going to soil their spotless hands with the grime of treason. After dinner the friends went their several ways: Egmont to the Court where he stayed dissatisfied but hopeful that Philip would come to realize how loyal he was, Horn to a gloomy misanthropic retreat, William back to Antwerp musing over his old companions' pitiful folly. Had Egmont risen, says Pontus Payen, sixty thousand men would have followed him and he could have taken Brussels without a blow. Sir Roger Williams, an impartial Englishman, who fought at one time and another on both sides, agrees that “these two chiefes being joyned would have carried all the countrey in general to have done what they listed”.

William's dream was shattered. The bold resistance he had meditated was postponed because, in his own later words, "my brother and comrades of the Fleece preferred to sell their lives cheaply".

For a time at least the plans for armed revolt were frustrated. The Prince resumed his hopeless task of crying peace where there was no peace. He pressed for convocation of the Estates—desiring, of course, not a supreme Parliament, but voting of supply and redress of grievances. Margaret was willing enough—she feared the perversion of the whole country—and Catholics and Protestants alike saw in it a last chance of salvation. Philip, with Alva and his army almost ready, was impenetrable ; and the constitution remained in abeyance. After perfecting his local arrangement at Antwerp, Orange, on 12 October, went north into his governments of Holland, Zeeland, and Utrecht to effect a similar compromise for Amsterdam. Personally he was despondent and not anxious to go ; but Margaret besought him not to desert her, and the burghers of Holland actually offered him a fee of £55,000—which he refused as he thought better avenues for expenditure might very likely open up. To go was no worse than not to go, so he went. At Gorkum he staved off threatened new iconoclastic disorders and allotted the Reformers meeting-grounds outside the town. At Utrecht he adopted a similar plan. Margaret, unstable as ever, was by this time commanding him to grind down the heretics without scruple, but the Prince, although conscious that any settlements he might make must be impermanent, coolly replied that the Accord must be observed. At Amsterdam, where almost all the citizens were Protestants and where the walls were surrounded by water, William, after restoring the churches to the Catholics, saw that the only thing for it was to allow

the reformers to have their own places of assembly within the walls. Margaret appealed fractiously. "Cannot some arrangement be made with boats?" she demanded. "How in the world could one make them preach from boats?" ran William's rejoinder, "I cannot imagine who could have made your Highness think of such a thing."

While thus occupied he wrote to his Saxon father-in-law giving a frank account of his position and appealing for help from the Lutheran princes who had not, as yet, shown overmuch sympathy for the Dutch Calvinists. The Elector and the Landgrave responded to his entreaties by arguing that he ought publicly to adhere to the doctrines of the Augsburg Confession. We gather indirectly that during these last months he had become, secretly, a Lutheran. But he did not think the time ripe for open repudiation of the old faith. Although he promised Hesse (November, 1566) that he would overtly inform Philip of his change of camp he never did so. All this question apart, what is certain is that it tortured him to see the rival sects of Protestants as bitterly intolerant towards each other as the Catholics were towards both. "Wäre der Calvinischen lehre nit zugethan," he protested to the Landgrave, "I am no believer in Calvinism, but to my thinking to allow this land to be covered with troops and drenched with blood for the mere difference between the Augsburg Confession and the doctrines of Calvin is neither right nor Christianly." He sent his brother John and other envoys to use reason with the Germans, he strove to convince them of the atrocity of the Spanish rule, he held out hopes that the Calvinists might soon turn from their prisons and imbibe the pure milk of Lutheranism. Embassies, letters, appeals to emotion, appeals to intellect: all were fruitless. The Lutheran princes did not propose to waste men and money in rescuing on

set of religious maniacs from another. France and England failed Orange also. At home this wise man, standing as it were upon his mound of thought, surveying with clear deep eyes the medley of forces weltering in the outstretched country at his feet, aware of the horrors to which those forces were driving the people, made a last appeal for toleration. In a manifesto of great length and exhaustiveness (it occupies twenty pages in the printed archives) addressed to the States he proved, by references from contemporary and past history, that it was unfeasible, even were it just, to annihilate Protestantism at that stage, pleaded that further dissensions would desolate the country, and suggested that the Accord should instantly be confirmed and that, by setting apart particular districts for the adherents of each religion, the Government might ensure their dwelling together in perpetual amity and prosperity. The document was issued with all diffidence—William apologised for having, though so young, thrust his advice forward—and breathed a splendid spirit of tolerance. Had its contents commended themselves to Philip, the Netherlands might have been one of the few countries in Europe to escape the horrors of war waged in the name of Christ.

But war had almost commenced. In December Valenciennes, a place full of heretics, “proudest,” as Pontus has it, “of all the cities which had received the gospel of Master John Calvin,” had refused to receive a garrison. The Duchess proclaimed a siege and sent bloody Noircarmes to invest the town. At first the beleaguered were successful; fortunate sallies raised their enthusiasm, and they heard that friends outside were planning their relief. Disillusionment soon followed, for in January (1567) Noircarmes descended upon the rabble of patriot peasants which had collected at Lannoy and killed 2000 of them. Prisoners and stragglers were

burned over slow fires, women sold by auction, little children turned naked into the snow-covered fields. Brederode, who had promised to leap to the city's succour, sauntered from place to place debauching with a gang of companions of the pot. Orange knew that the besieged thousands, with a ghastly fate drawing ever nearer, were looking to him as their only possible saviour. A new oath that Margaret was pressing upon him, an oath binding him to obey implicitly any and every royal command, increased the tension between the Government at Brussels and its principal servant. Spies in Spain informed him that he was destined for the block. Yet, in view of the terrible strength of Alva's coming army, he feared to break the last ties before he had effected his military combination of nobles. At Breda, which he took on his way back to Antwerp, he conferred with Hoogstraten, Horn, and others. They discussed the new oath with indignation, but Egmont had already taken it and could not be drawn in; and nothing came of the meeting but a foolish resolution of Brederode's to present the Duchesse with a new "Request". Margaret not only refused to see the Great Beggar but peremptorily demanded that these gatherings of nobles should cease. "Sous l'empire des plus sombres preoccupations,"¹ the prince rode back to Antwerp with Brederode at his side. They entered the city on 4 February amid shouts of "Long live the Beggars" from half the population. Margaret was pressing upon them the new oath which they could not take. Alva's army was ready to start. Valenciennes could not hold out before Noircarmes much longer. All over the provinces the royalist captains, Meghem in Brabant, Aremberg in Friesland, were preparing for a new onslaught upon the Protestants. Revolt was only a few weeks off.

¹ Th. Juste.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST OF LOYALTY

IN William's absence Antwerp had been gripped in a firm hand by Hoogstraten. That courageous young nobleman had been a consistent supporter of reform, but, like the Prince, he was intolerant of excesses, even when committed by his own side. The Calvinist mob, presuming presumably upon his known "advanced" views, had attempted to take up the thread of church-wrecking where it had been broken off. Almost alone, the Count had dashed into their midst as they were stripping the last rags of decoration off the almost naked cathedral, killed three of them outright with his own sword, and hanged half a dozen more under a form of summary jurisdiction unknown to the law. This cowed the disorderly, and for some months the rival sects lived together in comparative harmony. At the end of January, however, Margaret, returning to the assault, had demanded that preaching should cease and alien preachers be expelled. Popular feeling ran high again, and the newly-arrived William, after conferring with reformers and magistrates, sent a deputation to Margaret to repeat to her the all-important lesson that she had not yet learnt: that, with the Protestants as numerous as they were, the reformed religion could never be stamped out. The Duchess replied by repeating her requests more positively than before. Her position had certainly received an increment of strength. Valenciennes was doomed. The Confederacy had broken

up. Most of the provincial governors were faithful to her. Alva's penal army was almost ready. It was not strange that she should be in no mood for mercy. All preachers must go, she insisted, all heretical sermons and services must be made an end of, and the communal guards must take the oath of unquestioning obedience to the king. William, still hoping to form with Egmont's help a defensive league amongst the aristocracy, deemed it—wisely or not—impolitic to flout her orders and informed the sectaries that they must assist him to carry them out. Unable to probe his motives or inspect his ulterior designs they were horrified and angered to the point of fury. A report spread that he was going to issue a proclamation forbidding all religious exercises, and on 2 March a crowd of 2000 gathered around his door and declaimed against his supposed defection. All the Prince could do was to tell them to keep quiet and wait upon events. Only Egmont's final decision to bind himself body and soul to the royal chariot finally ended William's long-cherished hopes for a patriotic confederation of the Knights of the Fleece.

William was not the first man to raise the standard of insurgence. He had suffered from the usual disadvantage which hampers men who see things from too many points of view. Co-ordinating and weighing forces and "balances of criminality" had not led him to a clear unmistakable definition of his attitude. He was bound to rebel, but, as has been indicated, the time of his rebellion was fixed by circumstances over which he had no control. The last of these was the precipitate action of other patriots, men who did not see things in many aspects, and in whose simple organisms the pure stimulus of oppression induced almost automatically the pure impulse of physical retaliation. Brederode, William scarcely interfering, had for some time been

enlisting troops in Antwerp with a view to raiding Walcheren and seizing the strategical ports of Flushing and Middleburg. But the first armed assault upon the government came not from him but from another, far worthier but no less headstrong—Jean de Marnix, Lord of Tholouse, younger brother of St. Aldegonde.

This youth, fresh from the University and newly married, was a cultured and fascinating personality, distinguished as a scholar and fervent in his Calvinism. His brain aflame with visions of the immortal deeds just weakness might do against evil strength, he had spent some time peregrinating in the North, collecting a heterogeneous rabble of religious enthusiasts, half-baked soldiers, outlaws, and incorrigible vagabonds. After sailing down the coast of Holland and failing to land at Walcheren, his little fleet with its 3000 men on board turned up at the Scheldt and landed them. They took up position at Ostrawelle, within sight of Antwerp walls. Orange did not move—his affair was to keep Antwerp in order—but Margaret, refusing Egmont's offer of service, despatched from Brussels 400 men of her own guard and 400¹ of Egmont's Walloons under the iron-hearted P. de Lannoy, Seigneur de Beauvoir. At early dawn on 13 March (1567) this force assembled secretly at St. Bernard's Abbey close to Ostrawelle. The Spaniards advanced without noise and then, when within sight of Tholouse's trenches, gave a loud cheer and fired a volley. Antwerp was awaked by the noise, and the citizens flocked to the ramparts to watch the fight two miles away. It did not last long. The rebels were seized with infectious fear. Their wild fire could not stop the advance of Beauvoir's trained men, and when the foremost royalists reached the fortifications

¹ These are the lowest estimates.

the defenders, in spite of Tholouse's desperate efforts to rally them, fled pell-mell. The flight degenerated into a massacre. Seven hundred took refuge in a farmhouse; it was set on fire, and by flame or steel every man of them died. Scarcely a rebel survived save three hundred prisoners, and Tholouse himself, as the victor related, "although he offered 200 crowns ransom was hacked into 100 pieces". Thus befell the first pitched battle in the war of Dutch liberation.

Antwerp went mad. The Calvinists had stood helpless while their brothers were being butchered. Now, spurred on by the appeals of Tholouse's young wife who hoped to save her bridegroom, they surged towards the Red Gate of the city armed with the first weapons they could pick up. "The Commoners," as Thomas Churchyard puts it, "began to clap on armour and made a most resolute mutinie crying 'Vive les gueux,' that is to say 'live poore men,'" though he romances in saying that they begged Captain T. Churchyard to lead them against the foe and that that gallant officer did so and "gat much blood and victorie". In the Prince's belief a ghastly calamity was imminent. If de Beauvoir were attacked by the citizens, thought William, the Government's revenge would be terrible. But that possibility was as nothing compared with another. The city contained thousands of Protestants thirsting for blood; once they had tasted it outside the walls a horrible carnage inside was assured. The three parties wanted no encouragement to spring at each other's throats. A single blow and the whole of that great town with its tens of thousands of women and children, its untold wealth of money and merchandise, might be given over to fire, murder, and rapine. It was at this crisis, with this prospect before his eyes, that William performed the most heroic actions of his life.

Springing upon his horse he forced his way unattended through the crowded streets first to the market-place (Place de Meir) where he stationed the city guard, then to the Red Gate. A sea of passion-flaming faces tossed about his knees, wild voices screamed insults at him for his cowardice in not attacking the Spaniards. With the utmost difficulty he reached the gate. There he turned round and calmly faced the swarm of Calvinists who were on the point of rushing out into the fields with their axes and hammers, rusty guns and two-handed swords. "Servant of Antichrist!" they shouted; "soldat du pape!" "mechant traître!" with other epithets that the mellow cynic Pontus Payen calls the "charming little titles which the Protestants are wont to bestow upon their adversaries". Hoogstraten appeared in sight and pressed his way through to his friend. When it was seen that William was attempting to speak the howls redoubled. A cursing weaver took aim at his breast with a pike, but an interposing hand knocked it aside. Little by little, however, the infuriated herd found itself listening in spite of itself.¹ The Prince was talking such obvious sense. "Tholouse's men were all dead": that was true. "Nothing could be gained by fighting Beauvoir's men now": that was probably true too. Gradually the mass of William's hearers were persuaded not to pass the gates they had battered down. A few hundreds persisted in their folly and William, disclaiming responsibility for them or their fate, let them go and returned to the market-place. As it happened, even those few thought better of their resolve when they saw the Duchess's troops and pelted back through the gate. The only result of the sortie was that Beauvoir murdered

¹Thomas Churchyard assigns Orange's rescue and the crowd's pacification to Thomas Churchyard. "What (quoth the Captaine) will you kill your governours? Fie, for shame, hold still your weapons."

his three hundred prisoners in cold blood in the desire to reduce his impedimenta.

Inside the city the disorder grew hourly more alarming. William's single-handed triumph over the mob at the Red Gate had not destroyed its passions. The Calvinists—largely belonging to the dregs of the population—broke open the gaol and with the help of the prisoners seized the Place de Meir, planted stolen cannon there, and barricaded the space with carts and paving-stones. Before sunset there were 12,000 armed men assembled on that one spot, cheering for the Beggars and yelling threats of pillage. Black fear seized the unorganized Catholics. From all over the town rose the frightened screams of their women. The city guards had been moved to protect the town-hall and the magistrates; other forces of law and order there were none. At any moment the rage of the tumultuous army in the Place de Meir might become irrepressible and send them pouring through the streets, into all the houses and all the rooms with their torches and their steel. Alone in a fear-frozen town the Prince did not despair. He pulled the terrified magistrates together; then spurred, again without attendants, to the Place de Meir, where he confronted the gibing Calvinists for a second time. By dint of sheer will force he induced them to appoint deputies to treat with the civic dignitaries. The deputies demanded the keys of the city. William temporized, and a short truce was arranged.

Darkness fell. All that night the loaded Calvinist guns threatened the town, and around the fires which blazed in the great market-place thousands of ragged fanatics lay sleeping, whilst their less slumbersome comrades flung oaths and battle-cries out to the ears of their trembling fellow-citizens. William dared not rest. Under cover of the gloom he sped about Antwerp,

gathering and arming the Catholics whom he had brought up to support the city guard. From dawn till dusk of the next day combat was staved off by conferences. Deliberations in the town hall resulted in the offer to the Calvinists of most favourable terms. They were promised that the intra-mural worship guaranteed in the previous year should be permitted to continue, that a city guard composed of men of all creeds should be formed, and that it should be backed up by a small body of professional horse and a fleet paid for by all the citizens irrespective of sect. The concessions were substantial; yet, as William saw, the self-control of the Calvinists could not be trusted. Many of them were extremists with an intense hate for the Catholics in their hearts; some were out for loot; all were so excited as to render their sudden general infection by a lust for slaughter quite likely. In the night William conceived and executed a plan which exhibited his wonderful opportunist genius at its greatest. He knew and regretted the enmity which subsisted between the Calvinists and the Lutherans. Since, however, it was there, he determined to make use of it. With great haste, consequently, he had conversations with the leading Lutheran ministers and laymen. His own notorious leaning towards the Augsburg Confession served him well. Comparatively easily he persuaded the good men that, for the moment, the cause of the Catholics was theirs. Well before daybreak the Lutherans, three or four thousand armed men, had stolen down to the Scheldt bank and encamped. The aid of foreign residents also invoked, the Prince waited for the light.¹

The morning of 15 March, 1567, saw three separate hosts, 40,000¹ men in all, ready for battle in Antwerp.

¹This is Motley's number. Gresham says 50,000; William eight and twenty—his being the lowest I have seen anywhere. May it not

So high was passion running that there was no hope of keeping them in check another day. "I never sawe men," wrote Gresham, "so desperate willing to fight." Only one course was open to William if the city was to be saved, and for the third time in three days the man to whom his Spanish contemporaries imputed a white liver went into the midst of a ferocious multitude with his life in his hands. He had already got the Catholics and Lutherans to accept the new articles. With Hoogstraten, a few magistrates, and a hundred horse, he rode through the Calvinists until he had reached the very middle of the Place de Meir. Whilst an attendant read the list of concessions the Prince sat silent, surveying the strange scene spread beneath his eyes. Then, with no sign of agitation, he explained briefly his reasons for holding that the articles were exceedingly generous to the Protestants. Further, he continued, the Catholics and the Lutherans were now united on the side of the authorities, and together they overwhelmingly outnumbered his auditors. As he spoke, the Calvinists wavered; his influence was magically cooling, his logic patent. When, in loud emphatic tones, he concluded with "God save the King," there was a pause as they struggled against the power of his spell. But their resolution faltered and broke and from 10,000 of the most disloyal throats in Europe came a great sweeping roar, "God save the King". The victory was won.

"Sir," wrote the victor on 17 March: "I can well tell you that I have had the luckiest escape in the world and that by God's grace I count myself as one new born." Nothing said he of the effort, nothing indicated

be the most accurate? Antwerp's population was 100,000, half presumably being females. If four-fifths of the remainder were of fighting age there must in the years just before have been an exceedingly large juvenile mortality.

of the sublime courage which had alike thrust him into the danger and secured the escape. The light of those three days had shown him worthy of the title hero, rarest-deserved of all appellations. A man buoyed by a great hopeful enthusiasm might have taken all the physical risks he took and have borne all the arduous labours he bore, with no more than a semi-consciousness of what he was doing. William had to his knowledge nothing whatever to gain however he acted: even his superbest deeds were done in cold blood. He had already decided to quit the service and the dominions of the King whose name he had made the mob cheer. He was out of favour with the orthodox and, by his faithful devotion to duty, had courted the hatred of the heretics. However great might be his services, he knew he would get "small thanks at court". Shortly afterwards, in truth, Margaret actually did express disgust at his behaviour and his settlement, annulling the articles he had patched up with so great pains. In this dread hour, aware of no future for himself save one of exile, poverty, and obscurity, seeing little hope for that cause of freedom which he had espoused, he risked life, reputation, and popular affection in order that he might do what he knew to be his duty towards the Government of which he was still a servant, and what he believed to be the best thing for the interests of the city entrusted to his care. It is just possible that modern writers are wrong in assuming that his refusal to allow the citizens to sally out against de Beauvoir's little force was a wise one. Sir Roger Williams, a judicious and unbiassed man, declares that to his positive knowledge William subsequently regretted his action. "I heard the Prince say," runs Sir Roger's story, "that, if hee had known the warres then so well as he did since, he would have ranged on their sides." Orange, he adds, wished that

“his valiant brother Lodowicke had been in his place”. If his second thoughts were the better, if the military revolution should have commenced—and the immediate consequences of such a policy would have been terrible in the city—when Antwerp was aflame, there can at all events be no doubt as to the magnificent bravery William displayed or as to the consummate skill with which he pursued the line he did take. With unremitting application to detail, he settled the final shape of the convention between the religious parties in Antwerp, and then prepared to depart out of the town and out of the Netherlands.

The final severance from Margaret and Philip had been brought about by the new oath. At the beginning of March the Duchess sent Orange a document for signature : no loyal citizen could conceivably object to it, but the more distinguished the subject the greater the need that he should take it. . . .

“By this means, witnessing to your intention vigorously to carry on the business of your governments, you will put an end to the calumnies and rumours which you say are being spread about you, although for my part I hold them false and their originators mistaken ; not being able to believe that a heart as noble and of such extraction as you are, successor of lords who have done so many services to Princes aforetime and received from them such great honours as recompense (as every one knows) could be so forgetful of his duty as to wish to fling aside the great obligations which he owes to his Majesty and the country.”

Appended to this letter was the form of the new oath concluding :—

“I solemnly swear that I am ready to serve him and to obey him, as against all without limitation or

restriction. Witness this signature and my hand. Made at Antwerp this day of March, 1567. (Subscript) I William of Nassau have signed this in lieu of my oath."

William, loyal citizen or not, refused to take an oath against his conscience.

"No such novelty was ever proposed to any of those predecessors of mine whom Your Highness praises so lavishly, not without reason. To them nevertheless I hope in nowise to be found inferior in matters concerning the service of God, of the king and of this land; yet I find that the said command and letters compel me to withdraw from my governments and to abstain from further action until His Majesty, coming here in person, shall be more fully informed of the sincerity of my deeds, and in order that my innocence and truthfulness may be made clear, which at present my slanderers prevent. And of this I have thought it best to warn Your Highness so that you may send me the necessary discharges by some gentleman to whom I may deliver my commissions; assuring you that wherever I may be I shall not spare body or goods in the service of His Majesty and of these provinces."

To Margaret the resignation was more than unwelcome. Fearing to lose her strongest servant before servants still stronger had arrived with Alva from Spain, she replied that she had no power to accept it, and sent her secretary to press Orange to reconsider his decision. He would not. His mind was made up.

On 2 April—only a fortnight after the Antwerp disturbances—he went at Margaret's request to Willbroek, "on the canal beyond Mechlin," to meet Egmont and Mansfeld. He made a last effort to bring the Count to reason. Egmont, who had just been ruthlessly reducing

Valenciennes for the Government, was unshakable in his optimism : he could be made to understand neither the state of the country nor Philip's evil mind. The tale (dubiously true) is that William waxed bitter. "I had rather," Egmont is alleged to have said, "die a thousand deaths than take up arms against my king." Philip, he insisted, would come and remedy all ills. "Yes," retorted William, "the Spaniards will certainly come to the Low Countries, monsieur my cousin, since you wish it, but I can assure you that your head will serve them as bridge." According to one authority he gave Egmont as grim reminder Alva's old remark to Charles the Fifth : "Hombres muertos no hayen guerra"—"Dead men make no war". Neither sentence, if uttered, took effect. The two friends, who had fought so often side by side on battlefield and in council, felt, they knew not why, that they would never meet again. They embraced weeping and parted.

William returned to Antwerp to make the last preparations for flight. At that precise moment there was no bolder alternative course open to him, even if he sought one. Valenciennes had capitulated on condition that its inhabitants should be spared—a condition that was ignored by Noircarmes and his troops who butchered hundreds. Bois le Duc followed the example of Tournay, which had accepted its garrison with no more than verbal protest, and Antwerp was plunged in a wave of lassitude and depression so deep that Orange was convinced that the city would succumb to the Duchess immediately his own presence was withdrawn.

On 10 April he wrote to Philip resigning his offices for the fourth time in a year, but quite finally this time. He still made use of conventional expressions of loyalty—impoliteness profits nothing—and declared, with as much sincerity as ambiguity, that his life and wealth

would always be available to His Majesty's *true interests*. He had pacified Antwerp and Holland, suppressed iconoclasm, refused the Hollanders' crown and kept his feudal oath, but he could not blind himself to the condition of the country. A supplement to this went to Spain from the Duchess. "He offers," said she, "to remain Your Majesty's very humble and very affectionate vassal, about which I have my doubts . . . and although he has written me other letters, I have not replied to them, so as to put an end to the matter once and for all." Orange's last act in his official capacity was to help the Antwerp magistrates persuade the Protestant preachers that it were better they should leave the city pending news from the king. Next day (11 April) with some of those men, and a number of merchants, he himself set out for Breda, thousands of the townsfolk coming out of the gates to bid him farewell. Their sympathy and more could not have lifted the mournful load from the souls of the travellers. Was it for this that the compromisers had made their boasts? Was it for this that the martyrs, men and women, had gone to death glorifying God and predicting the tyrant's downfall? As the party journeyed through the spring fields, now breaking forth with the new life of the year, many, even of those who had been confederates, wept bitterly in the hopelessness of their hearts. Only the Prince was unshaken in his steadfastness. "The Prince of Orange," as an enemy wrote, "was not of those who made these sad lamentations; far otherwise, with marvellous constancy he admonished his companions to bear patiently their exile, looking for better things." Entering his town of Breda he was requested by its Lutheran citizens to write, for the Government's benefit, a testimonial to their loyalty in all save religion. The departing governor consented; not perhaps without a sense of the wan and

pitiful irony of the thing. Evidence as to civic character given in the name of Orange would be a poor shelter from Philip's wrath, a poor palisade against Alva's pikes.

Farewell letters to Egmont and Horn were written on 13 April; strangely enough, in the Latin tongue. Egmont, his old glittering comrade, for whom he felt admiration and affection besides compassion, he reminded of the deliberateness and long continuity of his purpose to resist aggression. He hoped, he said, that the Count would not think he had done wrong. To the Admiral, who had not so completely identified himself with the reaction as had Egmont, he directed a scathing exposure of the administration. To Margaret he despatched a last courteous explanation of his position, asking her to let him have his young daughter Mary who had been three years in Brussels at court. He had been wiser had he also secured the withdrawal of his son from the University of Louvain, as he had only too much reason to realize afterwards. Finally he entrusted a messenger with a letter to Berghem, who died three weeks after its arrival in Spain, but probably had a chance of reading it first. It may have been meant for the King of Spain's eye, and, as it has been found in the Royal archives, presumably met it. William told the prisoner that the country "for which I care more than for myself or mine is being dragged into complete ruin". He reminded Berghem that a long while before, in the presence of the council, he had defined his attitude: "Had it not been for the persuasions of yourself, my lord, and the others, I should have retired then to avoid subsequent calumnies, besides the toils and troubles that I have had to bear since, even to the risk of my life". But he hoped "that his majesty would take it in good part". Margaret wrote to Philip saying that she had loved Orange as her own son. Philip sent Egmont congratu-

lations upon taking the oath, adding that in his case the formality was quite superfluous. Previous to the despatch of either of these communications Alva, leaving Madrid for the Netherlands, was entrusted with full powers to execute drastic punishment upon both Orange and Egmont, and commanded to seize the latter with all possible speed and not to let his trial last more than twenty-four hours.

The Prince had made all necessary explanations. He tarried at Breda for eleven days and then, hearing that a scheme for abducting him was afoot, departed hurriedly, on the day before his thirty-fourth birthday, with very few attendants, to Grave and thence to Cleves. At Cleves the first thing the much-enduring man met was his "mauvaise femme," who hurled upon him an avalanche of reproaches for leaving wealth and power behind him and dragging her into exile and a dull German castle. When she scoffed at him for his turpitude in preferring flight to combat "there could not" writes Pontus, "be greater grief than he endured". But no recrimination came from him. Anne was not worth it.

With his household he remained at Cleves for a week or two. Trains of Netherland refugees entered the town daily. All along the frontier, so William heard, similar exoduses were taking place. Everywhere the Spaniards were triumphant. The preachers were being driven from all the towns and their followers executed in batches, hanged, many of them, on gallows constructed from the planks of their own new churches. The faint-souled recanted; the obstinate took to the woods or the sea. Of the Confederacy the last organized remnant vanished with Brederode. Drink and separation from Louis of Nassau, who had wielded a good influence over him, had set the seal on his degradation. Whilst Orange

was doing titan's work at Antwerp, Henry of Brederode had been at Amsterdam revelling and reviling with a gang of men of all classes united by the bonds of a common bankruptcy and a common rascality. Secretary de la Torre had been sent thither to budge him and had given Margaret deplorable accounts of his conduct. "Those who were most familiar with him are debauched men and of little substance; he and they congregate on the shooting-grounds where he drinks with them and shoots with the bow, all crying 'Long live the Beggars'." After refusing to leave Amsterdam he was stricken with sudden apprehension and agreed to do anything Margaret pleased on condition that he was pardoned. She gave him no pardon, but allowed him his revenues pending sentence from Spain and, on 25 April, a dionysiac procession bore him to a ship bound for Embden. He died in Germany next year, in mental and physical collapse.

William went on to Dillenburg with his wife and suite. Old Juliana, his mother, was there, and blunt faithful John, ready, as always, to give him and his a home. The Prince's estates had gone, he had no money, the old liberal combinations had melted away, and Alva's arrival would make the Government stronger than ever before. With foreign powers polite but distant, with his brothers and a few intimate friends as his only noble adherents, unable to hire mercenaries and able to rely on no volunteers save what ill-armed and untrained Dutch Protestants might rise at his signal, he had to begin the fight for liberty all over again. Most men would have shrunk disheartened from a task so immense, so probably rewardless.

CHAPTER IX

ALVA AND THE OUTLAW

THAT summer William bearded, lined, early thinned of hair, sojourned at Dillenburg, his childhood's home, endeavouring to rouse the lethargic German princes. They went so far—the Lutherans—as to send an embassy to Margaret asking her very civilly to relax the stringency of the anti-Protestant decree. Fruitless though this was, they would do nothing for the exile or his cause. Both the Elector and William of Hesse (son and similitude of the old Landgrave Philip who had just died) strove to dissuade him, as did the Emperor Maximilian, from taking the field. “Hee found,” so Roger Williams summarizes the matter, “little comfort at their hands saving the Count Palatine of the Rhine and his owne House of Nassau. Not withtout (with?) mervaile, for those flegmatique people will second nobody without money beforehand and assurance to be paid monethly, especially being gaged to serve the weakest partie.” Countless were the letters which passed between the Nassau castle and the various German courts, but politically their effect was almost negligibile. William's despondency was intensified by the behaviour of his wife. Anne's discontent grew blacker and more violent. She was now actually playing with those “papist horrors,” the thought of which had formerly been repellent to her. She besieged the Prince with shameless demands to be sent back to the Netherlands. Other considerations apart,

William could not entertain these wifely supplications for the sufficient reason that his pocket could not furnish two separate households. The child (Maurice), therefore, who was born to them in September, entered the world at Dillenburg. The completeness of Orange's apostasy from Rome is attested by the fact that the boy was baptized into the Lutheran communion. One Zell, a theologian lent by the Landgrave, had with the aid of certain volumes of divinity, effaced the last trace of doubt from the Prince's mind. Henceforth he was a Protestant; his religiosity deepened until the indifferentist and opportunist became one of the most spiritual men of his time and an unbending, though never intolerant, Calvinist.

But to the Netherlanders the distant Prince in his ancestral castle, his frustrated political plans, his spiritual and domestic trials, were remote and unimportant things. William of Orange, the beaten and broken and dispossessed, had, for the time being, gone out of the lives of the burghers and farmers of those populous provinces. Their attention was compelled by brutal facts nearer home. For scarcely had Orange and his little company left frontier and struggle behind than the chains of oppression were doubly soldered, the Spanish yoke loaded and buckled with unprecedented ferocity. An earnest of what was coming appeared in the shape of an edict which Margaret of Parma issued on 24 May, 1567. Death was ordained for all heretical preachers and teachers, all citizens who housed such persons or allowed servant or children to attend Protestant meetings, all hymn-singers, all who sold unorthodox literature, all who made deprecatory allusions to Catholic dignitaries, and all who had their own infants baptized or helped to baptize other people's infants according to any rites save those of the Catholic church. When wholesale emigra-

tion followed this proclamation death was also prescribed for all who assisted people to flee the country. The machine which was to carry out these decrees and others still more monstrous—for Margaret was rebuked by her brother for her indecent mildness—was at last ready. Alva had indeed embarked at Carthagera on 10 May.

Philip had long been planning the invasion of his own territories. All his promises to return to the Netherlands in person had been intended merely to act as a blind to preparations for an advent more terrible. Rumours of the magnitude of these preparations had been current in the provinces for many months. William of Orange himself had had early news of Alva's appointment (December, 1566) from one of his Escorial spies, "a gentleman Burgundian of the King's chamber," as our countryman concisely has it, "who was greater with one of the King's secretaries wives than with her husband". All the winter and spring had been devoted to the selection of the finest veterans Spain possessed, to the number of nearly 9000 infantry and 1200 cavalry, men chiefly who had been through the Italian wars. Their equipment was provided with the utmost care and thoroughness, the infantry being clad in exquisitely wrought armour and armed with muskets, then newly invented. The commissariat and transport arrangements, perfected under the most experienced eye in Europe, were faultless; and the servants of God saw to it that the instrument of the divine vengeance against the profane malefactors of the Low Countries should not set out unaccompanied by an adequate squadron of 2000 Italian courtesans as well furnished and cognisant with their work as the army itself. No similar number of troops in Europe, under equal conditions, could have stood out for an hour against Alva's force. Its commander was in every way worthy of it.

Ferdinand de Toledo, Duke of Alva, was at this time sixty years old. From the age of sixteen, when he had won his spurs at Fontarabia, he had spent most of his days on active service. In Charles the Fifth's wars against the Turks, in the Tunis campaign, in the contest with the Smalcaldian League, he had distinguished himself by signal courage, and his sensational victory at Mühlberg had gained him European renown. After saving the remnant of the Imperial army at Metz he had been for several years generalissimo in Italy, where his conduct had been marked by supreme prudence and judgment : ceaseless labours had not bent his tall martinet's figure or undermined his constitution. His masterly generalship beyond all doubt qualified him to do Philip's military work in the Netherlands : his character made it certain that he would do both that and the politico-religious work with a will. He was as stony a bigot as his master ; he had all Philip's ferocity with none of his procrastination. For years he had been pressing the king to decapitate the Flemish leaders and have done with them, and his own intentions to "tame these men of butter" as he had tamed "men of iron" were not concealed. Insanely proud, greedy, ambitious, implacable, a hundred engraved and painted portraits register this man's spirit far more memorably and unmistakably than any mere written words could have done. His sallow face is usually presented "half-sideways". Below high shaven skull and wrinkled brows, hard dark eyes fix piercingly on the beholder. The nose is long and bony ; deep cruel furrows run from the inner corners of the eyes across the cheeks and from the bases of the nostrils to the calm but sinister mouth. The lips are half hidden by a thin drooping moustache which curls into a narrow beard, silvery black, flowing in waves from cheek and chin to the iron-blue cuirass. It is the face of a strong

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ALVA

FROM THE PORTRAIT BY TITIAN, IN THE POSSESSION OF THE COMTE DE HUESCAR, MADRID

1870

evil man who thinks the world is not good enough for him.

Brought to Genoa by Andrea Doria's fleet the army was marshalled at San Ambrosio beneath the shadow of the Alps. Then it started in three divisions on its long and tortuous march northwards. Over Mont Cenis it ploughed, through the difficult region of Savoy with the suspicious French hovering on its left flank and a cloud of Switzer mountaineers on its right, then through Burgundy and Lorraine. Ten weeks of steady travelling brought it to the Luxemburg frontier which was crossed at Thionville. There Alva found Berlaymont and Noircarmes, who received him in the name of the Regent. The greeting was as hollow as that which awaited him from the dread-smitten Netherland cities ; for the Duchess, who had been kept in the dark concerning the expedition until the last possible moment, who knew that taming men of butter was no simple affair, and was furious at her brother's apparent intention of superseding her, viewed the Duke's arrival with anything but pleasure. Alva cared nothing about the Regent's feelings, and continued his journey towards Brussels. On 22 August he advanced to Tirlemont, whither Horn and Egmont with other nobles rode to welcome him. Egmont was an old sore of his ; the laurels of St. Quentin were on his brow and the Spaniard grudged them bitterly. He had in his pocket authority to wipe out the score and intended to use it. "Here comes the great heretic," he exclaimed bodingly ; then, as though he had been jesting, summoned a smile to his saturnine visage, put his arm round simple Egmont's doomed neck, and rode along with him, amicably conversing.

From Tirlemont Alva proceeded to Louvain, where he called for Philip of Buren, Orange's son, and won the boy's heart with a factitious exuberance of friendly

geniality. Taking one foot regiment and a few mounted men with him, he next went direct to Brussels and, as soon as he had entered the capital, hastened to show himself at the palace. His reception was scarcely cordial; even the courtyard could not be passed without a fracas between his soldiers and Margaret's retainers. Conducted to Margaret's bedroom he found the Duchess bolt upright on her feet, with Egmont, Aerschot and Berlaymont around her. He remained for an hour, all standing throughout the interview. No high words passed: Margaret's demeanour was frigidly haughty, Alva's triumphantly polite, almost careless. Next day he exhibited his commission as Captain-General, and asked her Highness to assist him in his work, announcing at the same time that he proposed to garrison all the towns in the provinces. Margaret acceded to his demand, but her indignation was not to be hidden. Her complaints were bitter to Philip that he had not accepted her resignation before the Duke came, and that she had got little thanks for her nine years' work. They availed nothing. She lingered at Brussels, avowedly hostile to Alva, and then, in December, left the country with a pension and the sympathy of a people which had forgotten her tyrannies after feeling Alva's.

Alva set to work without delay. The helpless cities bared themselves to his garrisons, and gave up their keys without a murmur. That much secured, the next step was a dramatic one. Before Alva had left Spain, it had been arranged that he should govern autocratically with a small council of marionettes, and that all the nobles who had ever given any sign of independence should be arrested. Whilst his garrisons were being lodged Egmont and Horn found the Duke friendly to a degree. The doubts that even in spite of this were fomented in their brains by anxious acquaintances were dissolved

away by affectionate messages from Madrid. They should soon get their reward. They should soon know what gratitude was. Philip was not oblivious to good deeds. On their part they might make themselves more precious than ever, add yet more to the amount of his debt, by going to Brussels and helping the good Duke Alva. They went. On 9 September the grand Prior Ferdinando, Alva's bastard, gave a dinner, the two Counts being present. In a sudden access of pity Ferdinando warned them to flee. Noircarmes, perceiving Egmont's agitation and guessing its cause, callously persuaded him that safety lay in loyalty. After the meal the party adjourned to Alva's mansion to consider the great engineer Pacheco's plans for a citadel to dominate Antwerp. Alva felt a little unwell and went away, the other gentlemen remaining in debate until seven o'clock. As they rose, an officer came and whispered to Egmont to step aside. He did so and found himself surrounded by halberdiers and deprived of his sword. Horn was similarly seized in the courtyard. Their houses were occupied and ransacked for incriminating documents which were not forthcoming. A fortnight's incarceration in the capital and the two were despatched to the safe keep of the castle of Ghent. Their secretaries Bakkerzeel and Loo with Van Straalen, burgomaster of Antwerp, were apprehended simultaneously. Orange was out of reach,¹ but Hoogstraten, who had meant to answer a summons to Brussels, only escaped through luckily wounding himself with a pistol at Cologne, thereby detaining himself. Montigny and Berghem were fast in Spain. Alva had been in Brussels seventeen days.

His third stroke was the establishment of a small

¹ Granvelle asked what use it was catching minnows when the salmon leapt free, and Titelmann cried, "Woe to us for the war that comes from Germany".

omnipotent junta with himself as omnipotent president ; the body which Philip had formally authorized in the spring. This organ, known to its members as the Council of Troubles, and to the rest of the world as the Council of Blood was empowered to hear all charges of treason, treason being defined by itself. The rights of municipal and provincial executives and courts were high-handedly swept aside and the Council of State itself was superseded. There was not even the pretence of formal regularity about its institution. Philip assigned it no charter and Alva issued no commissions to its members. The slightest offence, of commission or omission, against priestly or royal pretensions was declared to be treason, and as such punishable with death. Jurisdiction was summary : only two members of the council, Del Rio and the impious debased Juan del Vargas, had the privilege of voting upon a verdict. The Flemish members, like Noircarmes and Berlaymont, were perforce nonentities, or like the sage and somnolent old Hessels with his endless murmur of "To the gibbet, to the gibbet," mere spurs to the Spaniards' activity. In the last resort even the votes of these latter could be set aside by Alva. But there was rarely need of this proceeding. Del Vargas, who had absconded from Spain after raping his ward, being in the American historian's words, a man to whom "to shed blood was the only important business and the only exhilarating pastime of life . . . there could be no possibility of collision where the subaltern was only anxious to surpass an incomparable superior". To collect the victims for the maw of this insatiable ogre of a council a small army of commissioners was appointed to scour the land, seize suspected or, failing them, unsuspected men and women, and to confiscate their property in order that the "golden streams" of Alva's prophecy

might flow into the impoverished coffers of Spain. From his impotent German retreat William of Orange saw his country running with blood. There was no escape for any one who once fell into Moloch's hands. If a report favourable to a prisoner was ever presented to Vargas he would return it for correction. The martyrs of both sexes and all ages were sacrificed by dozens at a time in almost every village and city. At Amsterdam a man who had induced a rebel not to shoot a magistrate was beheaded for having influence over the Government's enemies. A maidservant who had neglected to denounce her mistress for striking an image a year before the last edict appeared was drowned. Sometimes 100 persons from one town would be sent to the stake together. At the end of three months 1800 had been murdered by axe, rope, or fire; before Alva left the Netherlands that number had been multiplied tenfold. Charred or headless carcasses were exposed at almost every corner, in almost every market-place. Commerce sickened, nearly died; the marts were deserted, and the people, unable even to shake the bloody dust of their fatherland off their feet, walked gloomily about the thoroughfares or shrank trembling in their joyless homes, no man knowing when the hounds of Alva might enter to bear him away to death. There was no help for them; they were powerless. The garrisons were everywhere. Before the year was out the Duke's great Antwerp fortress, built at the citizens' expense, frowned over that great town, its bastions baptized under the names of the grim commander who had ordered its construction. Men felt that before long this citadel would serve as a model for an indefinite number of others.

Alva saw his fortress thoroughly munitioned and then returned to Brussels. On 28 January, 1568, con-

sidering that all preparations necessary for the safe retention of the Provinces had been made, he issued a proclamation. A herald with six trumpeters took his stand before the Brussels palace and, in a loud voice, read a summons requiring the Prince of Orange, as chief inspirer of the late seditions, to appear with Louis of Nassau, Count Hoogstraten, Cuylenburg, and others before the Council of Troubles within the space of three fortnights, with the option of being put beyond the pale of the law. William was accused of stoking the Confederacy and inciting Antwerp heretics to excess under the guise of doing his duty. As a Knight of the Fleece, he would not in any case have accepted the jurisdiction of Alva's Blood-Council. But at the present moment he and his friends knew that to put a foot across the frontier would mean to put both feet in the grave. They refused to obey the summons. Philip, in reply to petitions from the Emperor, laid it down emphatically that surrender was the essential preliminary to parley. On 13 February the Prince received another blow. With uncharacteristic rashness he had left his fourteen-year-old son at Louvain. The temptation to Alva and Philip was too strong to resist, and they kidnapped the boy. He was, be it conceded, delighted enough to go to the Spanish Court, had seemingly no comprehension of his father's views and situation, took a childish pleasure in festivities arranged for his benefit by his captors, and, before his twenty years' stay in Spain was over, became thoroughly Hispaniolized. When, later, he returned to his native Netherlands, he was morose, bigoted, and yellow-skinned. The University authorities were, naturally, scandalized by the young Count's abduction. The poor pedants even remonstrated with Del Vargas regarding the flagrant breach of their privileges. "Non curamus vestros privilegios," replied

that simple scholar, and with that¹ they had to rest content.

Three days after the seizure of Buren a new decree of the inquisition, shortly afterwards confirmed by Philip, was promulgated. The Holy Office had grown as weary of publishing long tables of specified offences committal of which entailed death, as it had of the formal trial of accused persons. It condemned to death the whole of the Netherlands population, old and young, male and female, with certain named exceptions, and the King commanded that it should be enforced with all convenient speed. It is, of course, scarcely to be supposed that Philip and his advisers seriously proposed to cut off 3,000,000 heads, although to the poor Flemings and Dutchmen nothing, by this time, seemed incredible. But the new decree made executions more frequent, it gave an impetus to the current of that "stream of gold," for the simple reason that now there was no need even to pretend to convict a doomed man of heresy. Many a burgess was "convicted of a hundred thousand florins and of nothing else," and that such men might not, on the road to the scaffold, inflame the spectators by passionate recitals of their wrongs, their tongues were commonly passed through rings and the tips of them inflamed and swollen by the application of hot iron. Small wonder that, though as yet there was no organized rising of the despairing folk, there sprang up north and south bands of brigands—"Wild Beggars"—who pillaged promiscuously and murdered when they met a monk.

William the Silent's outlawry became absolute upon 2 March, by which date the "three fortnights" had expired. On 3 March, writhing beneath the wound dealt him through his son, he replied to the sentence,

¹The pleasing retort, "Vester Latinus est extreme pauper," had not then been invented.

lavishing scorn over the base-bred Blood-Council and its monstrous pretensions. On 6 April he published his "Justification," which he caused to be printed in six languages and scattered throughout the Continent ; for, as the penetration of Mr. Frederic Harrison has remarked, "William was one of the first politicians in modern Europe to understand the importance of political manifestoes addressed to the public opinion of Europe". The "Justification," which is substantially his own work, is neither eloquent nor stilted. It is a plain exposition of William's case : a review of recent occurrences and of his own course of action, and a denial of the charges made against him. It may be observed that there was no attempt to attack Philip personally. The show of respect and fealty was well maintained. Although Orange was already discussing the rumours that Philip's recently deceased son Carlos had been murdered by his father, the time for the printed repetition of such stories had not yet come.

William sketched the development of the revolt—the Cardinal, 'jealous, ambitious, desirous of ruling alone,' the infraction of dearly-held privileges, the spread of the reformed religion and execration 'of the very names of Inquisition and placard, by which a countless multitude of people, fifty thousand may be, have been savagely put to death and others forced to abandon goods and kin and go to live in perpetual and miserable exile simply (as we may see more clearly every day) because they would not put behind them the commands of God and follow after the inventions of men'. He told of the popular loathing of the inquisitors, how their officers had to go furtively to work at night, 'and even then at risk of their lives and serious outbreaks of the commons'. He dealt with the establishment of the new bishoprics, and his own attitude of loyal protest,

claiming to have acted without thought for himself and with a single eye to the welfare of King and country. After a stirring and scornful passage in which he inveighs against the Spanish error that resolute men were to be tamed by tortures and brutality, he recounts his personal wrongs. 'Forgetting the services I have performed to my own disadvantage and those of my ancestors, even such of them as died at their Prince's feet, they rob me not only of my estates by false and contemptible charges and unlawful processes but of my honour and my child that are dearer to me than life.' These things, he exclaims, are no more to his own prejudice than to that of the King, 'to whose oaths and promises no regard is paid,' and he concludes by praying to God that the scales might be removed from Philip's eyes, that he might see in their true light the 'amazing and odious' charges made, and that the world might learn they had been poured into the monarch's too credulous ears by vile and despicable calumniators.

The "Justification" given to the world, William (who had in the previous December told the Landgrave that war was now inevitable) set himself energetically to arrange for an attack upon the Netherlands. His overt repudiation of the old faith had materially improved his prospects with the German Princes: Hesse and Saxony promised assistance and everywhere permission was granted him to recruit mercenaries. The peace in France had untied the hands of Coligny and other Huguenot friends of Louis of Nassau who had been fighting for them: they would, they said, take the field, and it might even be possible to rouse Elizabeth of England into activity. William sold his jewels, his plate and his tapestries and thus raised 50,000 florins for the war-chest. The ever-generous brother John did what he could by pledging heirlooms and mortgaging

land, and Louis, who had but a younger son's portion, found 10,000 florins. A contribution of 100,000 came from merchants in Antwerp, Amsterdam, Haarlem, Leyden and other towns conjoined with the refugees in England. Cuylemburg, Van der Berg and Hoogstraten gave 30,000 apiece and the aged Countess Horn, whose sons were in Spanish and Brabantine prisons with the toils fast closing around them, 10,000. The levies (news of which of course reached Alva) were made principally by Louis of Nassau. His authority was a commission issued from Dillenburg in April. He was empowered as a faithful servant of Philip to enlist troops (in Germany, then the military emporium of Europe) and to invade the King's territories—in Philip's "interests," to use William's old phrase. The forces were required (ran the document) to expel the bloody Spanish soldiery from the Netherlands, to save the people from an insupportable domination, to maintain the Constitutions guaranteed by Philip and his ancestors, to prevent the total suppression of religion by the edicts. Even then the Prince was far from "letting himself go". His last letter—that of 17 April—before the invasion commenced dealt in part with the wording of the Justification. Did the Landgrave think that more reverence ought to have been paid to Philip? Was the word "kriegrüstung" wise; or did it imply too much an offensive expedition rather than mere measures of defence? Likely enough he took thought of these things not so much with a desire to make his position clear as towards the Spanish Government, as to avoid any risk of frightening or irritating the German Princes who had old-fashioned conservative prejudices. He could not be too careful with such folk.

CHAPTER X

WILLIAM'S FIRST INVASION

WILLIAM'S plan of campaign was as ambitious as his forces were small. He had a large skeleton of strategy very insufficiently clad with flesh. Three simultaneous attacks were to be made against the Netherlands from different quarters—one from the North, one from the East and one from the South. The most considerable army was Louis of Nassau's; originally 4000 strong it ultimately swelled to 10,000 mercenaries and refugees. He was to invade Friesland and Groningen by way of the Ems. From Germany a detachment under Hoogstraten (soon replaced by Villars) was to cross the Rhine and Meuse and attack Limburg; whilst a party of French Huguenots gathered together in Artois by de Cocqueville was to cross into Flanders. William himself proposed to wait with reserves in the neighbourhood of Cleves, watching events. Under certain circumstances the plan might have proved a good one. Had Villars and Cocqueville commanded strong bodies of men, forces even no more powerful than that which before the end of the campaign followed the standards of Louis, Alva would have had some difficulty in repelling the triple thrust. To have marched in person against one such army would have meant risking serious risings of the people in the other two quarters and, formidable as it was, the Spanish army, divided into three portions, would have had all its work cut out to defeat three patriot

forces of 10,000 apiece on three several frontiers, especially should one of the invading sections (as actually happened) have commenced by firing the national imagination with a victory. Unfortunately Louis' army was the only one which ever reached a size worth reckoning with. The Rhine detachment numbered 2500, the Huguenots certainly did not exceed a contemptible 2000 and by some accounts fell materially below that figure. It can scarcely therefore be said that there were three invasions; there were, rather, one small invasion and two small raids. The debility of the scheme under existing conditions must surely have been seen by the Prince of Orange. But the Huguenots could not have been transported to the north, and he probably hoped that the Limburg attack would create a diversion which might help Louis who, with the most Protestant Provinces as his objective, was under the circumstances very rightly given the body of the Protestant forces.

Villars took the field first. Crossing the frontier near Maestricht, on 20 April he laid siege to Roermonde. Alva promptly sent 1600 picked Spaniards under Lodrono and Sancho d'Avila against him. William's general retired, but on 25 April between Erkelem and Dalhem was overtaken and lost half his troops. Later in the same day the remaining 1300 men were ambushed in their entrenchments at Dalhem and their commander taken and despatched to Brussels. De Cocqueville's fortune was little better, for within a fortnight of assuming arms he was swept out of Artois by de Roeulx and crushed at Valéry by Marshal de Cossé, Governor of Picardy. William, no longer of any actual or prospective use at Cleves, went back to Dillenburg with Hoogstraten, there to listen to the rebukes of his fellow Princes and the Emperor, rebukes that men who have failed should expect.

Nevertheless Louis was still in the field. The Count with the half-heroic half-reprobate crowd which had flocked to his banners—banners inscribed “Now or never, victory or death”—had pierced the border on 22 April, 1569. After surprising the governor Aremberg's Castle of Wedde he advanced to Dam on the Dollart where his beloved young brother Adolphus joined him with a troop of horse. Men streamed in daily. On 4 May with over 3000 horse and foot he asked for and obtained a subsidy from the magistrates of Groningen, who were influenced less by his passionate appeal for help against the tyrant than by their fear that refusal might bring unpleasant consequences in its train. To Aremberg, as governor of the Province, fell the duty of checking him. That old friend of Granvelle's and enemy of reform had just returned from the French religious wars, and early in May he marched northwards with 2500 Spaniards. Meghem, with an equal number of men, arranged to meet him at Dam, where was Louis' camp. Before the two could effect a junction Louis fell back upon the Abbey of Heiliger Lee, situate upon a wooded rise which commanded the swampy lands between Ems and Lippe.

Aremberg, in spite of Alva's repeated warnings that certainty was preferable to belief, refused to wait for Meghem, now close behind him. On 23 May he led his confident soldiers along the narrow strip of firm ground which crossed the quaking turves and peat-brown pools to the abbey, bordered near the latter with thick trees. Louis and Adolphus were seated at dinner when a peasant rushed in and apprised them of the approach. They had ample time for posting the defenders. As the Spaniards came to the spot where the trees by the path ended they saw a body of Netherlanders on the brow of the hill in front of them and two squares of

pikemen and musketeers at its foot on their left. They opened cannon-fire upon the former who promptly ran. Wild with conviction of victory the veterans who had never known defeat swarmed off the path to annihilate the squares. In a few minutes half Aremberg's men were floundering in the bog, scarcely able to move, with the treacherous territory sucking at their legs. Louis' musketeers shot them down in scores where they wallowed, and on the green verge of the morass the pikemen waited grimly for those who struggled so far. As Aremberg and the rearguard hesitated whether to go forward or back, the remainder of Nassau's adherents swept round the base of the hill from the other flank and surrounded them. The day was lost and Aremberg, realizing it, spurred, old and gouty as he was, into the thick of the mellay and fell, hewing desperately, covered with wounds. But before his doom overtook him he had shot the boy Adolphus, first of his family to die in the great struggle.

Louis, believing Meghem near, drew off and occupied Groningen. His success had brought him little direct material advantage. No Province had been definitely won from its allegiance ; and although a thousand or so Spaniards had been slaughtered and the cannon "ut," "re," "mi," "sol," and "la" which Aremberg had conveyed from the musical burghers of Groningen had been captured, the blow to Alva's military power was insignificant. Morally the gain was considerable. The ragged army had proved to the world that even Spaniards were not invincible, and adventurers and money poured into Louis' camp daily. Alva, it is superfluous to say, was infuriated at the news of his general's defeat and death. He could scarcely credit it, but soon he had ample evidence that, as a notary who

knew the respect due to exalted rank put it,¹ "his lordship was shot through the windpipe of his lordship's throat, in his side through and through again, and likewise was his lordship's forehead above his eyes very doughtily wounded". The thanks the dead man got from his chief took the form of imprecations for his rashness.

The Duke resolved to take the field in person and to crush the rebels past redemption. But he dared not leave Brussels before having made it certain that when he had left it revolt should not spring up in his rear. On 28 May he issued an edict banishing Orange, Louis, Van der Berg, Hoogstraten and others on pain of death, and confiscating all their property. He levelled to the ground the Cuylenburg Palace—bush of seditious flutterings—marking its site with a pillar. Then he turned upon the noble prisoners; dead men could head no revolutions. On 1 June (Pentecost week, adds Meteren) he executed eighteen lords, including Kock and Treslong, in the market-place,² "under the windows of that cruel animal Noircarnes," with nine ensigns of Spain ranged round the scaffold in battle array. On the 2nd, Villars and three more were decapitated and their corpses exposed to the public gaze. But these were merely small fry; the great fish were reserved for the last course of the feast. On 3 June Egmont and Horn were conveyed under escort from Ghent and lodged in the "Broodhuis".

The accusations against them had been scrap by scrap in course of formulation for several months. That neither Alva nor the Blood-Council could have jurisdiction over Knights of the Fleece was a trifle judiciously overlooked. The charges were enormously

¹Quoted by Motley.

²Hoogstraten: letter to Orange.

long and portentous, based on ridiculous misrepresentations or insignificant pieces of gossip. Egmont had been heard to say that he would refuse to burn 50,000 men for the sake of the inquisition. He had urged temperance of action upon Margaret. He had—in accordance with the Duchess's own arrangement!—countenanced sermonizing outside the walls of his cities, and he had been a friend and consort of rebels, from the time of Granvelle and the jester's cap to the time of the assemblies at Breda and Hoogstraten. Poor Horn who, like Egmont, had only erred in being too loyal, was accused of having made the iniquitous proposition that "men should be allowed to live according to their consciences". It was said, and maintained in spite of the Admiral's indignant exposure of the thing's absurdity, that this nobleman who possessed nothing but debts, had threatened to raise 50,000 men and march on Spain to rescue his brother. These are mere examples of the charges, a few pearls from a gigantic and priceless chestful. Witnesses for the defence were not admitted; the evidence for the prosecution was concealed from the prisoners' advocates. Three days after the prosecutions closed, Alva, who could not have read a tithe of the documents in the time, announced to the world that he had thoroughly investigated the case and that the Counts must die. He had, as a matter of fact, brought their death warrants with him from Spain.

A great chorus of intercessions went up; the Knights of the Fleece, the Estates of Brabant, the Emperor himself, pleaded for the two noblemen's lives. Philip and Alva were obdurate; neither syllogisms nor sobs could turn them from their settled purpose. On the day of the sentence Egmont's wife went to the Duke's house and fell at his feet, half senseless in agonized supplication. Alva, the humorist, lifted her up with words of cheer

and sent her away radiantly happy. "Your husband shall be released to-morrow," he said. At eleven o'clock that night the sorrowing Bishop of Ypres was compelled to warn Egmont that death was near. At first the loyal Count refused to believe the news, but conviction soon overtook him. Never a coward, he did not shrink from the headsman's blade. But his tameless spirit was shaken by great blasts of anger as he thought of his innocence and of his helplessness in the grip of circumstance. At last he subdued himself, confessed, wrote a dignified letter of farewell to the King, and spent the night in prayer. Horn, who had perhaps no great desire to cling to a life which had brought him little, was even more resigned to his fate.

Next morning they were brought out from the Broodhuis into the square, where in times that must then have seemed to them very long ago, Egmont had broken many a lance in those old tournaments of the Brussels Court. To-day no flowers trailed along the fretted balconies, no draperies hung on the walls. Midmost of the square was a high scaffold covered with a black cloth. On all four sides of this the Spanish battalions, rank behind rank, thousands of men with forested pikes gleaming in the sun, stretched back in close array ; and beyond these were the massed murmuring faces of the multitude, come to see the last of an idol. Egmont wished to speak to them ; they were beyond range of his voice. He mounted the steps, passionately turning a last time to ask the captain who accompanied him if there were no hope of reprieve. Then, with a great effort of self-control, he bowed in prayer with the bishop, kissed the cross, threw his hat aside, knelt down, and, crying "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit," died.

A shudder ran through the square. Even the Spanish veterans were melted and tears stood in eyes

that had never known them before. They covered his body and blood with a dark cloak and led his friend to the block. The sullen old Admiral walked with his grey head bare and refused to admit his guilt. Wishing happiness to all there present he asked for their prayers, and knelt on the cushion. Before the axe fell he repeated the words that had been used by his companion.

The bodies were conveyed to burial: Egmont's to the Convent of St. Clare, Horn's to St. Gudule, where the coffins were surrounded by throngs of weeping, cursing people who had marched with the dead to the place of execution. The ghastly pallid heads were exhibited between flaming torches, and afterwards, it is alleged, sent off to Madrid in order that the King might suck the last savour from the sweetest fruits of autocracy. When the Spanish soldiery filed out of the square, leaving the scaffold unguarded, the many poor who had loved Egmont alive, pressed round it, dipping their handkerchiefs in the blood of two ordinary, not very worthy, fallible men, whose cruel martyrdom and fortitude of bearing had transformed them into saints. All Europe was shocked, as Brussels was shocked, and the dismayed wrath of the Provinces and the Orange party in particular was measureless. William himself was, he said, horrorstruck at the "great sadness and wickedness" of this "inhuman tragedy". "I ask you," he exclaimed to Lazarus de Schwendi, "is there any human heart, however hard, which would not be melted and stirred by this tyranny?" and his grief was not made any the less intense by the consciousness that his own attempts to raise the country had hastened his comrades' doom.

Soon he had other things to think about, for Egmont's limbs had been cold but a month when Alva was at Deventer with a magnificent force, Eric of Brunswick, Noircarmes, Vitelli, and de Roelx as his generals.

Meghem had been watching Louis in Groningen, but, Aremberg's end a lesson, had consistently refused to come to grips. The Nassau Count's army had swollen to 10,000; though, as Louis had perforce to live upon the country, the accretions were not devoid of their drawbacks; for the miserable inhabitants, conscious that Alva was approaching, had little desire to pay Louis subsidies in order to earn the privilege of forfeiting to the Duke the remainder of their property and being hanged for treason. As Alva moved towards Groningen the Count's troops, out for loot which they were not getting, began to show signs of a mutinous spirit. At the first skirmish the "patriots" fled helter-skelter, leaving 300 dead behind them.

Reckless Louis had only himself to blame. His brother, knowing that a victory over one regiment caught in a trap was not a great war won, had begged him not to risk a stricken field. The prospect of retreat into Germany, however, although that might mean a chance of helping William in the south, was not one that Louis could stomach. Fabius Cunctator never had "Nunc aut Nunquam" emblazoned on his banners. Had Louis collected his men at Reyden he might have barred Alva's progress for some time with the option, when further obstruction became hazardous, of falling back across the frontier. Desperate, both on account of his own innate "recovery or death" predilections and from a comprehensible grim wish to make his mutineers show fight, he staked all upon a throw and drew up his 10,000 at Jemmingen, on the peninsula between the Ems and the great Dollart bay. Not realizing their position the men clamoured for wages. As response they got a speech mercilessly explaining to them exactly where they were. The Spaniards shut off all retreat, and the only chance of escape was to beat them. Be-

yond that there was the sea or the sword and whatever prospect of gaming or spending wages there might be for drowned or disembowelled soldiers. Sulkily admitting the force of their captain's logic the mercenaries began too late to pierce the dykes and flood the isthmus. Before the waters were waist-deep the Spanish van arrived. The Nassauers fled and their position was occupied. Several attempts at recapture failed, and at last Louis mustered his whole army and hurled it against the enemy whom he imagined not yet to be present in force. He was mistaken. A new body of Spaniards rushed out from ambush, the rebels were struck with panic, and, although Louis himself fought demoniacally in his endeavour to rally them, they never halted in their flight. Alva's veteran's streamed after them, carried their trenches, and drove the bulk of them into the Ems. Seven thousand died, in bunches on the field or singly next day in the swamps. Louis, when all was lost, stripped and swam over the Ems into Germany.

Alva's revenge upon the Provinces which had had the audacity to supply Louis with money under compulsion was thorough. He hanged, burned, and confiscated; his soldiers pillaged and raped. Then with a pleasing consciousness of having warmed the hearts of Pope and King, he journeyed back to the capital, executed Bakkerzeel, Loo, and Van Straalen at Vilvoorden, and held a grand review of all his Spanish troops, 37,000 in number. What were the feelings at Dillenburg regarding Louis' foolhardiness may well be imagined. William had foreseen the results of bravado and had counselled caution; his position was rendered in every way more difficult and anxious by his brother's self-will. But not a word of reproach or bitterness came from him. Thus opened his letter to Louis after Jemmingen:—

“MY BROTHER,

“I have to-day received your letter by Godfrey, and have listened carefully also to what you told him to say. And as for the first point you may rest assured that I have never felt anything more than the pitiful success that came to you on the 21st of this month, for reasons you may well understand. Besides, it will hinder us greatly in the levy that we are making and has greatly chilled the hearts of those who would otherwise have been willing to render us all help and assistance. Nevertheless, since it has pleased God so, you must have patience and not lose courage for that in order to conform to his divine will; as also I for my part have resolved to do, come what may.”

The Emperor had, in May, formally commanded Orange to lay down his arms and to cease scheming against Philip. Jemmingen sent the German Princes over to the same side; they remained friendly to William personally, but even his adopted father-in-law and the Hessian Landgrave, men who had accelerated his drift away from Romanism, urged him to desist from active measures. He could get little encouragement from Elizabeth; all rulers were against him. That he realized the darkness of his outlook is easy to perceive by his letters. But the gage had been taken up and he would not release it. In August, he replied to the Emperor's ultimatum, detailing and denouncing with his usual thoroughness and fervour the atrocities of the Spanish rule, and denying hostility to Philip whom he conventionally declared to be incapable of cruelty. He recommended for Maximilian's perusal his “Justification,” and reminded him diplomatically that a spread of Spanish absolutism must be a danger to the Empire. Then, a month after Louis' catastrophe, he issued a solemn proclamation, warning all and sundry that he was assum-

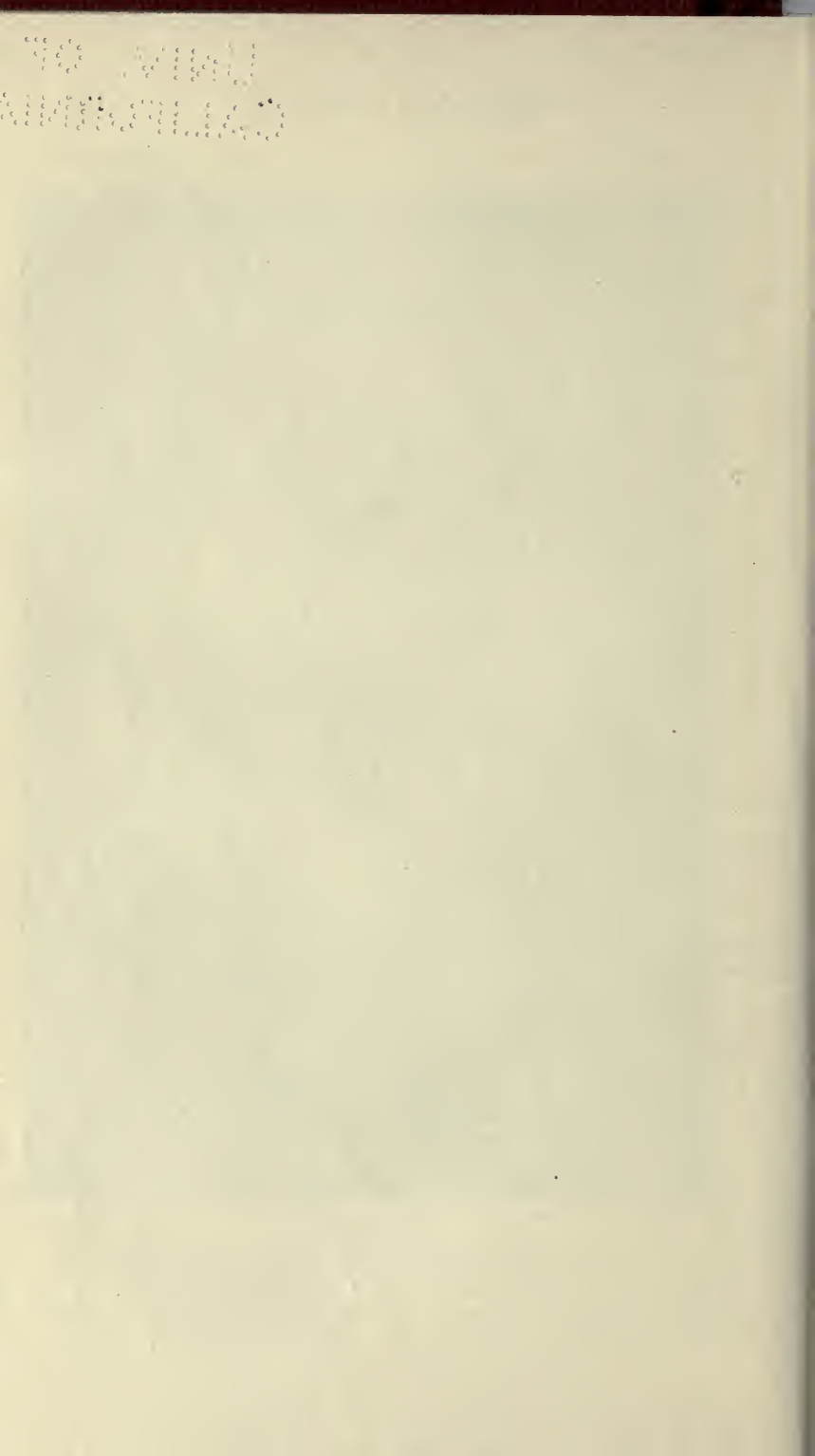
ing arms to break the Spanish power, and calling upon "all loyal subjects" to help with guilders and guns in the preservation of themselves and their posterity from an unmitigated servitude. The pretence—in a conservatively minded man like William it was an indefinable something more than a pretence—of faithfulness to Philip was still kept up. Three verses from the twentieth chapter of Proverbs, beginning, "The hope of the righteous shall be gladness; but the expectation of the wicked shall perish," headed this proclamation and the document as motto bore the epigrammatic phrase: "Pro Lege, Rege, Grege".

That same motto decorated the banners of William's new army. Although but little money had come in from the poor Netherland Protestants and powerful assistants were few, the Prince had managed (with the help of a loan from Frederick III. of the Palatinate and a tardier one from Hesse) to rake together a force of 21,000 infantry and anything from 6000 to 10,000 cavalry. The alliance with Condé and Coligny had been struck whereunder Orangists and Huguenots agreed to stand or fall by each other, neither party to rest content until both had succeeded. There was no fear of hostility, if there was no hope of help, from Germany as a whole. In September, 1568, the Rhenish electors, appealing to Maximilian to use his influence to modify the Spanish tyranny, found him, *pace* his remonstrances with William, tolerant, even sympathetic; partially, no doubt, because Protestantism had been making itself a really formidable factor in the domestic politics of his own Duchy of Austria. It was in September also that William's army mustered at Romersdorf in Treves; a congeries of mercenary German, Burgundian, and Walloon companies under officers some of them as unsatisfactory as the brutal boor Robert de la Marck, Lord of Lumey.

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100



WILLIAM THE SILENT
FROM A PORTRAIT AT DELFT



Crossing the Rhine at St. Feit, William led his troops down the river to Cologne. For a while he lingered, as though hesitating, in Juliers and Lüneburg and then, on the night of 4 October, swooped on the Meuse at Stochem and, under the light of the moon, got his whole army across the deep, swift stream by employing a massed body of cavalry as a sheltering dam. Only a few men and a considerable amount of stores were lost, but Alva, at first news, ridiculed the report that the Meuse had been forded. As far as the Duke knew, Orange was not in command of a winged flock of wild geese. But with the performer of miracles very substantially marching into Brabant the Governor's incredulity broke down. Alva was encamped near Maestricht and the question for him was pitched battle or refusal. Since his powers had reached maturity he had always had a pronounced liking for the tactics of sleepless cautiousness and wary worrying. Here there was a clear case for such procedure. In Friesland months before delays were dangerous. Louis had won one battle and must be crushed instantly. That he could, considering the size and structure of his army, be beaten was certain, and Alva's revenge for Heiliger Lee had been swift as a deadly dagger-thrust. But William, though in all probability his troops were ill-disciplined and not over-capable, had, as regarded mere number, an advantage over the royal general. It was no doubt likely that the seasoned Spaniards could, if called upon, overcome the German and Burgundian meretricians; but it was quite certain that a campaign without battles, marches without food, work without wages would overcome them; and Alva's preference for certainty as against likelihood was one of the most prominent and salient traits in his character. He set himself to watch William, to track his footprints and

keep the sheen of his steel within sight ; but not to fight. He sent men to all the villages to spread thorns for the bare feet of William's commissariat. "Othersome," in the chronicler's curious language, "poysoned the standing waters and pooles ; yea in some places milke and drinke was infected, milles were all broken downe and no corne to be grounded ; by which heathenlike and foule hellish practices the Prince's armie was like to perish." Shoeless and starving, Orange's men fell to quarrelling amongst themselves—Germans and Burgundians detested each other—and mutinied against their leader. On one occasion, whilst quelling a disturbance, the Prince himself actually had the sword shot out of his hand. Thus the way was paved to complete disaster.

Changing his camp almost daily Orange passed through St. Trond and went on towards Jodaigne, Alva ever at his heels, sometimes within cannon-shot. At Jodaigne news came that the Count de Genlis, who with 3000 Huguenot foot and 300 horse had been traversing the Ardennes, had crossed the Meuse at Charlemont, and was desirous of joining William at Waveron. The River Geta flowed between friend and friend, and on 20 October William began to ford it, posting Hoogstraten and 3000 men to guard his rear. Alva would hear nothing of a general engagement, but he allowed Don Frederic, his son, with 7000 horse and foot of both armies to launch himself upon the enemy and cut Hoogstraten off from his van. The movement was successful ; practically all the 3000 were killed, Hoogstraten sustained a self-inflicted pistol wound in the foot which proved fatal in December, and Orange had the black mortification of joining Genlis' reinforcements at the expense of an almost exactly equivalent number of men. The Prince was less than a dozen miles from Brussels

and from that Louvain whence his son had been seduced. But he had shot his bolt, and, although the fight at the Geta ford had been the only encounter of any magnitude, he was thoroughly beaten. He knew that the Netherlanders loathed Alva; he found they feared him even more, for the inhabitants of Liège and Louvain (men "with buttered hearts and flegmatique livers"¹) refused to open their gates to him. Little Diest in Brabant was the only town which moved at all; and Diest suffered cruelly for its rashness. Hoping to keep at least a part of the army in readiness for the spring of 1569, he dismissed his woeful and discontented infantry and retained 6000 horse which he proposed to lead into France where the religious wars, with their customary regularity, had again broken out. The German mercenaries would not go; Orange recrossed the Geta and went back towards the Meuse once more. It was flooded and impassable, and the hunted man again found it barred against him. Countermarching towards France he had daily skirmishes with the foe, gaining slight successes at Le Quesnay and Câteau Cambrésis. On 17 November he crossed the French border in a neighbourhood he had known, under circumstances somewhat different, ten years before.

Maréchal de Cossé hung on his steps as Alva had done. Charles IX in indignation and affected amazement wrote asking what reason he had to lead a large body of armed foreigners into the realm of a friendly Sovereign. William's reply bore no trace of his late overthrow. The old note of loyalty both to monarch and to religious toleration was struck. He wished to do Charles service by helping his subjects, who aimed at freely exercising the universal human right of unbound conscience, to reject papal tyranny. But Charles need

¹ Williams.

have had no apprehension. William got his men through Lorraine, ekeing things out with the aid of some money from the Huguenots, and some more (under the rose) from Catherine de Medici, who always had the maximum of strings to her bow. Even when Genlis had frightened the French King by bringing up 1800 cavalry William could do nothing. His followers grew more and more threatening every day, and, in January at Strasburg, pawning everything he possessed to pay the mercenaries, he disbanded them. "We may look upon Orange as a dead man," wrote Alva, "the greater part of his people are shattered, starving, cut up." Twelve hundred of them stuck to William and accompanied him and his brothers, Louis and Henry, into France, where they flung themselves into the Huguenot war. Louis and young Henry were at Jarnac with Condé who died there; and again at the rout of Moncontour where Louis, now the adored of half France, dazzled the field with his courage. William was at neither battle, although he took part in the siege of Poitiers. A few days before Moncontour he left the country telling Brantôme (whom he visited and conversed with in the historian's garden) that he had other work to do than lose his life in a losing cause. Where he had gone no one knew. Brantôme thought he had crossed to England to seek Elizabeth's help; others suggested that his mission was to arrange a marriage between that Queen and Henry of Navarre. As it is practically certain that he did not go to England at all his object in going there need not be discussed. Some held that his destination was his Principality of Orange; some again that he had secretly stolen to La Rochelle; and yet more that he was dead. Most authorities to-day believe that Hoofd is right in maintaining that he really went direct to Germany, disguised as a peasant, with a

handful of companions—an extremely perilous adventure for one whom the hot-blooded branded as a coward. In November, 1569, he was at Dillenburg; in December at Arnstadt. Alva was preparing fresh forces, and tightening the fetters of absolutism; the German Princes had fallen away, the Emperor was cold; it was unsafe for the outlawed man to stay in one spot for more than a day or two. As Roger Williams words it, “after this the poore Prince remained in Germanie (God knowes) almost despairing to doe any more good against the Spanish, but that the Almighty stirred up new instruments to maintaine the cause”.

CHAPTER XI

DISTRESS AND RECOVERY

WITH Orange out of the way Alva was able to concentrate attention upon the Netherlanders and to furbish up the machinery of the religious inquisition. The gift of a jewelled hat and sword from the Pope signalled the imparting of a fresh impetus to the campaign of burning and hanging, and the issue of an edict enjoining with menaces the employment of Catholic midwives and the orthodox baptism of every child within twenty-four hours of birth. But something more than mutilated bodies and salved souls was required by the Duke. He had come to the Netherlands to tap a gleaming river of gold and an adequate stream had not yet flowed into the treasury in spite of wholesale confiscations of property. On 20 March, 1569, he summoned the Provincial Estates to Brussels, and, pitilessly disregarding the last constitutional right—the right to grant supplies—of the Netherlanders, informed them that three levies were to be made; one of 1 per cent (the hundredth penny) on all property, one of 5 per cent on all transfers of real estate, one of *10 per cent* (the tenth penny) on the price of every piece of personal property or merchandise whensoever it should be sold. Principle apart, the crudest economists in the assembly could not but see that such amazing imposts must give the already terribly burdened country and its commerce a blow from which they could never recover. Viglius himself protested with ardour to the insane, blind, bigoted soldier;

the local assemblies, though granting the first tax as a sop, fought tooth and nail against the others. At Amsterdam the city magnates shifted from man to man the odious duty of publishing the decree ; the city was fined 25,000 guilders for contumeliousness, with the result that a number of the stubborn burghers secretly raised a collection for Orange and sent it to him imploring his help. Utrecht refused its assent, even when mercenaries were ominously quartered upon it ; its charters were revoked and millions' worth of its citizens' property segregated. So bitter was the resistance, so universal the cessation of business, that even Alva was brought partially to his senses ; and in August he agreed that the taxes should for two years be compounded at a sum of 2,000,000 guilders annually—not the stream he would have liked, but a tolerably sized rivulet. The arrangement induced a temporary respite in the constitutional struggle.

Those two years saw William of Orange's fortunes at their lowest ebb. His life was in constant danger of assassins, his liberty of creditors, not only personal creditors but people from whom he had borrowed money to be used for the cause. Day and night he was tormented by his debts, by his discontented soldiery who were scattered up and down the Rhine Valley, by anxieties brought on him by his wife, by the need of continual journeys and of economies the smallest and most miserable. To Dillenburg, to Arnstadt, to Sondershausen he goes ; to Arnstadt again, to Dillenburg again, never staying long in one place. Now he is asking good John to pawn his last pieces of plate, now to send him a pair of mended breeches or a sorry nag with cropped ears. His letters speak painfully of his condition. " Unless God helps miraculously," he writes (29 December, 1569), " religion is in great peril of ceasing in the land

for a long time, seeing the softness and the little courage of those who ought by reason to advance and sustain it . . . This night my sister has sent the coffer (you know which) to Weimar, for Count Bourcart de Barbi wrote telling her that the Duke would take it for 6000 florins." A month later (17 January, 1570) he expresses a fear to John that his letters to the French Admiral concerning the wretched outlook are being intercepted.

"All the world knows I have come here to purchase succour for the poor Christians, and for that reason all those of the King's party seek means to do me some evil and the Duke of Alva also; and my soldiers too, to whom I am still in debt, might themselves do me some ill turn. And as for staying at Dillenburg it is a strong place and were I there strangers would come thither from all sides, pretending to come as friends whilst maybe sent by the Duke of Alva to spy out the place or even to poison me. Your expenses there, also, would be very great because of the strangers; and my men of war, hoping by that means to procure their pay, might attack the castle . . . I think, should my wife not come to Dillenburg, that I shall remain here [Arnstadt]; but if she comes I shall endeavour to go there as soon as possible, and consult you and my mother as to what should be done. So pray let me know what my wife does."

And again from Arnstadt (17 February) the man whose establishment in former days had rivalled that of his Emperor writes to the faithful brother:—

"As concerns the bowl and other articles of furniture we can decide when we meet. To me it seems that the best thing would be to sell it all at the fair, piece by piece, and that we should get most money that way. Regarding the sideboard, Count Gunther tells me that he will do his utmost . . .

but, my brother, I do not know how to thank you for the great trouble you take on my behalf, and I am more than sorry that I should be the cause of so much worry and expense and debt to you."

Yet it was in these darkest hours that the Prince, apparently negligible as a political force, did a thing which laid the foundations of the power which afterwards enabled him to establish himself in the Netherlands and the Netherlands in their independence. Not very curiously, perhaps, the step he took was almost casual, almost accidental. Louis of Nassau had been impressed by the success that his Huguenot friends had achieved with privateers. He and Coligny between them persuaded William, in 1569, to issue letters of marque to Dutch fishing vessels. As a Sovereign Prince he had that right; although his adversaries in their rage stigmatized his ships as buccaneers, and nicknamed their crews—who proudly adopted the nickname—the "Sea Beggars". Several scions of noble houses—Albert of Egmont was one, Brederode's brother Lancelot another—took William's commission, and the chief command in the fleet was given to Adrian de Berghen, Seigneur de Dolhain. Dolhain's organizing efforts were aided by the half-open connivance of Elizabeth of England. She was at the time on very bad terms with Alva. Non-intercourse between England and the Low Countries (for the second time during Philip's reign) had been decreed, the Queen having "detained" in her ports treasure brought by Spanish merchantmen seeking refuge from Condé's privateers. William's Admiral soon collected a respectable number of vessels, manned by a scarcely respectable collection of cosmopolitan rovers, and began systematically to harry sea-going commerce without much discrimination as to flags. His prizes ran into hundreds, and he captured much treasure, but his

piratical excesses during the autumn and winter drew reprimands even from the Prince's friends ; and in April, 1570, on the advice of Coligny's brother, the Cardinal de Chatillon, William withdrew his existing commissions, appointed Gillain de Fiennes, Seigneur de Lumbrès, Admiral in Dolhain's stead, re-officered the ships and issued regulations for the better conduct of the fleet. Rotterdam, the Scheldt estuary and the Zuyder Zee were to be its refuges. Only Philip's ships were to be attacked. Discipline on board was strictly to be maintained, and every vessel was to carry a minister of the Gospel. William himself could scarcely dare hope that these instructions would be obeyed. They were not. Lumey de la Marck (the Wild Boar's descendant) was as vile a desperado as Dolhain, and the excesses of the Beggars' new fleet were no less terrible than those of the old one. The Spaniard himself was emulated, prisoners were held to ransom, ecclesiastics tortured and murdered, villages burnt ; so that in a historian's¹ mild phrase the little navy won " rather an unenviable reputation ". There was little improvement in morals, but there was great improvement in efficiency, and such a terror did the Sea Beggars become that no Spaniard willingly took the sea route to or from Spain. Before, however, their culminating exploit is related there is one episode, concerning more directly the Prince of Orange, which demands attention. That episode is the last development of his relations with the Saxon wife he had married amid such pomp ten years before.

Naturally the sullenness and discontent Anne had displayed before her husband's flight from the Netherlands were not diminished by his crushing defeat in the field and the apparent complete ruin of all his prospects. Even in comparative luxury she had found it hard to

¹ Miss Putnam's.

live with him ; with nothing before him but poverty, discomfort, and wandering in exile, she deserted him, sending him as sole acknowledgments of the tie a constant stream of querulous irritating letters. In 1567 he had refused to assent to her departure from Dillenburg, and Maurice was born there ; but when he was over the border campaigning she took flight to Cologne and set up there a fairly pretentious establishment. She begged money from her uncle, Augustus of Saxony. Augustus sent Colonel von Berlepsch to examine her circumstances. To Berlepsch she complained (so he reported) that she had foreseen Orange's disasters and vainly warned him not to pursue his headstrong career. He had persisted. He had run into debt, he had pawned her jewels. Dillenburg had been dull beyond bearing. There had been no company there save a disagreeable mother-in-law ; no doctor ; nothing tolerable to drink—not even beer—and nothing to eat. Even the most devoted of wives could not "live upon air and devour her own hands and feet". So she had come to Cologne where there was at least plenty of ladylike society, and she would rather die than go back to Dillenburg and the Nassau family. Berlepsch went on to John of Nassau to borrow funds for rebuilding the house at Dietz whither Anne was willing to go. John answered her that he had borrowed 170,000 florins on Orange's behalf by mortgaging his estates, and had besides lent the Prince another 50,000 florins with wagons and artillery, and, without asking a farthing of payment, had entertained his brother and his brother's household. He had done his utmost, and thought that the turn of Augustus and the Landgrave had come. Receiving Berlepsch's narrative, Augustus wrote abusing Anne for her obstinacy and counselling her to return to Dillenburg. Back came a messenger from the recalcitrant wife beseeching

a small loan to enable her to provide for her three small children. Money obtained, Anne sent her attorney to Maxmilian the Emperor, praying him to ask Philip to transfer Orange's estates to her, her husband being dead in the eye of the law and she technically a widow. Spain, not unnaturally, did not view the appeal with favour, and the Princess reopened her demand to the Elector for maintenance; Augustus finally—she urged that he had been responsible for her marriage—redeeming quantities of her pawned jewels and allowing her enough to remain at Cologne with some twenty servants. In November, 1569, William, considerate as ever, anxious for a reconciliation, hoping patiently to touch the better side of her nature, wrote to her :—

“ MY WIFE,

“ I have seen from your letters and heard from your secretary the reasons why you have not come to see me. They certainly do not seem to me good reasons considering the duty a wife owes her husband if she bears him any affection. You say that you have sworn never again to set foot in this country, but you ought not to forget that long ago you promised before God and his church to abandon all things and follow your husband, which I think you ought to have more at heart than any frivolous trifles if you mean to do what you ought to do. I am not saying this to persuade you to come here; I make no point of that since the thing is so objectionable to you. But as in duty bound I remind you of your vows. For more than ever when a man is as I am in so much trouble (as you know) there is nothing in the world which comforts him more than the consolation of his wife and the sight of her patience under the cross which the Almighty has laid upon her husband, especially when he suffers for actions which he believed would promote the glory of God and purchase the liberty of his country.

. . . I swear to you that had you asked me to come to Frankfort and not to Sibourg (which is infested by all my bitterest enemies) I should not have failed to go there to find you, although my friends continually beseech me never to enter a town because of the great danger of it. Realize that you, my wife, leave me to be sustained by others not so near to me."

The letter goes on to expose the impracticability of Anne's suggestion that they should seek refuge in France or England. It were doubtful whether any Prince, whether even the German Princes or the Kings of Denmark or Poland, would admit the outlaw who had now been thrown over by the Emperor. And he half-humorously told her that things would never go so well with her (though with all his heart he desired her happiness), but that they could go better. Carefully, desiring above all not to offend the irritable woman who, although she could never be a real companion to him, was yet bound to him, William drafted this appeal; but sympathetic imagination was not stirred in Anne nor her sense of duty and decency awakened. On 7 February William wrote to John: "As for my wife I think that since I cannot stay long in one place, we had better leave her where she is, especially as she does not wish to come to me". A few days afterwards he received from her a frigid reply to his letter, Anne observing that if he really desired to see her (which she doubted) he must either do so at Leipsig—she would not object to a chance of seeing the Elector again—or at the Landgrave's. Orange could not, dared not, go to these places; and on 6 April she sent him another letter, sneering, stinging, phrased with a diabolical cleverness and mordancy. Patently he did not wish to see her, and the feeling was mutual. If she saw him the en-

counter would merely increase her anger; and justly. As for money, perhaps he really could not afford to give her any, perhaps he could. Doubtless he knew best; and she hoped that a merciful Providence would deal with him more kindly than he had with her. This epistle, sent in reply to an uncondescendingly forgiving letter of his, exasperated him. The generosity the lonely and penniless man had shown had been wasted, and he despatched the shrewish outburst to the Landgrave with an intimation that he had done with Anne, and that Philip and Augustus had better, once and for all, relieve him of this nuisance and disgrace. He told Philip of Anne's extravagances. "By this," he added, "you may see what love she bears me and what thanks I get for enduring so many follies and insults . . . you can clearly see where the fault lies; yet I swear by my soul's damnation that year after year I have sought to see her and to get her to live with me." Once again (long anger was not possible with him) he softened and in May he was addressing her as "*Ma femme, ma mie*"—"My wife, my dearest". After that she came to Siegen. There they had their last interview.

It was their last; for the bond before many months had gone was shattered beyond repair by the revelation that Anne had been unfaithful, habitually and deliberately unfaithful. During her residence at Cologne she had formed an intimacy with one John Rubens, an Antwerp magistrate (and father of Rubens the painter), who had fled from suspicion of his Orangist sympathies. Him she had—he did not resist but he would not have dared to make advances to the wife of a Sovereign Prince—seduced. Largely on account of this liaison it was that she had made such difficulties about leaving Cologne to see her husband, and Rubens even followed her to Siegen when she at last met William. In March, 1571,

William, to whose ears reports of the scandal¹ had come, sought out Rubens and drew from him a confession. Hearing of this, Anne wrote to her husband at once, denying her guilt "by God in Heaven"; but there was no room for doubt in the matter. "Satan and my own imbecility spurred me on," lamented the hapless magistrate to John of Nassau, "but I have incontinently acknowledged my sin. I have repented. I have condemned myself and incurred the penalty of death. If I invoke your pity it is for the sake of my wife and children rather than from my desire to prolong my own life."

Rubens' wife, a woman of saintly and courageous character, saved her husband from the gallows. The success of her vehement pleas was perhaps partly attributable to the natural indisposition of William and John to risk the wide publicity which would certainly have followed Rubens' execution.² As for Anne something had to be done with her. William's patience was exhausted, the last shred of his affection had been worn away. Her children were taken from her and removed to Dillenburg where genial John, best of guardians, supervised their upbringing. She herself was kept in seclusion at Bulstein in Nassau territory, an object of genuine pity, miserably bemoaning the harsh fate which had made her a politician's wife, whilst a profuse correspondence went on between her husband's family and her own which was inclined, in self-defence, to ascribe the wretched Princess's degeneration to the influence rather of her later than to that of her earlier environment. Brooding and drink gradually undermined what

¹ Anne was betrayed by untimely pregnancy. Next August she had a child which Orange would not recognise.

² Rubens was first imprisoned at Dillenburg, then allowed to go to Siegen where his wife joined him and where, in 1577, Peter Paul Rubens was born.

remained of her mental stability, and she developed a lunatic's ferocity which made her a terror to every one around her. After much discussion, John of Nassau, in 1575, at last got rid of her, and she was removed to Dresden and caged in a bare dungeon. There two years later she died, completely mad, at the age of only 32 years.

During the period of William's wanderings in Germany there was ample besides his personal adventures and troubles to engage his attention. International relations from which he hoped ultimately to derive profit were engrossing, and under Alva's maleficent influence events in the Netherlands developed apace. In August, 1570, the warfare between Huguenots and Calvinists had once more been stopped by the Peace of St. Germain. Catherine de Medici, who had her weakwitted son Charles in the hollow of her hand, felt that the Catholic party had been growing too strong since the great victory of Jarnac and for a while favoured the conciliated Calvinists in order to redress the balance. La Rochelle and other strongholds were placed in their keeping, and royal smiles were lavished upon their leader Coligny and Louis of Nassau, now the most popular Protestant in France. Special reference was made in the agreement to the King's good friends, the Nassaus, and William's principality of Orange was in terms restored to him. Louis was in high feather. Rumour had it that Catherine desired to take his exiled brother into her service. The Count eagerly implored the King to espouse the cause of the Netherlanders and earn a people's gratitude and undying fame. He begged sympathetic Walsingham to enlist the succour of his mistress. Charles the Ninth agreed to subsidize Orange's mercenaries, and actually asked Coligny to draw up an

elaborate plan for the invasion of the Low Countries. Alva and Philip, whose spies kept them fully informed of these matters, began to get alarmed. William, not knowing when the moment to strike might come, kept in close touch with the cities of Holland. When his arm moved they must rise. If Elizabeth and Charles could be welded into a coalition—in France they had a scheme for the triple partition of the Netherlands—Alva was beset by foes north, south, east, and west. But a man of Orange's experience tempered his expectations. He was aware that the last thing the English Queen wanted was war with Spain—or with any one—and he did not nurture the delusion that Catherine de Medici and her son, in spite of their amicable messages, were the stuff of which champions of liberty were made.

What trust could be reposed in the rulers of France became evident in 1572. And nothing could move Elizabeth. In 1571 the Ridolfi plot was hatched. Philip, with the Pope's blessing, involved himself in a scheme whereunder Elizabeth was to be murdered and Alva was to land 10,000 men in England to help the Duke of Norfolk and his friends to put Mary Stuart on the throne. Elizabeth got wind of the affair, arrested Norfolk, and nipped the conspiracy in the bud. As the year was closing Alva sent two Italians to England to expedite the Queen ; that plan, too, was frustrated. But Elizabeth might have a thousand causes for just resentment, a thousand incentives to revenge ; she could not be tempted to rashness. She made no move to help the Orange party. She preserved the forms of respect and even of affection for her brother of Spain.

In the Netherlands Alva was rapidly reaching the end of his tether. He might advise Philip to sell all the Nassau possessions in the Netherlands, to execute Orange in effigy and to drag the Prince's escutcheon

through the dust ; he might affect contempt for the fugitive ; he might tell Philip that nothing was to be feared from England and France ; but he could not blind himself to the state of popular feeling in the Provinces in which he lived and endeavoured to rule. His attempts at coercion had been glaringly unsuccessful. His golden stream—although he still made feverish efforts to reassure Philip—had not flowed to the Escorial. Others also were aware of his failure. Viglius, whose friend Joachim Hopper was at the King's ear in Madrid, was urging a relaxation of the tyranny ; Granvelle, who still scrutinized events with his keen and wary eye, was in correspondence pressing a similar course upon the monarch ; and Philip, who had never quite believed in Alva's financial schemes as aureducts, was thinking seriously of superseding his Viceroy.

It was imperative that something should be done to pacify the people, and a partial reversal of policy was decided upon. Various proposals for a general pardon were formulated, much to Alva's disgust, and, in July, 1570, with an elaborate tableau of gorgeously appalled females representing Righteousness and Peace stationed around him, Alva at Antwerp recited before an immense concourse the decree upon which the population had placed its hopes. It proved to be a disappointment. Return to the Catholic faith was enjoined upon all heretics, and, at the same time, all heretics and teachers of heresy and even those who had wittingly failed to denounce heretics were excluded from the amnesty. No one in fact was forgiven save those who had done nothing which called for forgiveness. As Alva was forced to tell his master, the unrest of mind of the Netherlanders was not alleviated. A great natural catastrophe which came in November added to the troubles of the Governor and the distress of the governed.

The sea from Flanders to Friesland burst the dykes and swept over the land. Amsterdam and its whole Province narrowly escaped being obliterated; Rotterdam and other coast towns were flooded. Ships, houses, furniture, live stock, were destroyed to an incalculable extent, and it was estimated that a full 100,000 persons were drowned.

With the country thus smitten it might have been thought that the last thing its rulers would do would be to attempt to reimpose taxes which had been too burdensome even before the disaster. Not so thought Alva. In August, 1571, the two years' vote of the Estates would expire. Early in the year Alva's councillors learnt that he understood that subsequently to the two years for which commutation had been made, the tenth penny was to be levied. Viglius, no longer Alva's tool now that he knew the Governor's fall to be nigh, expostulated; even Berlaymont, narrowest of loyalists, protested, the Duke furiously raging, that the Estates had never consented to such an arrangement. Daily the councillors sought to restrain the headstrong man, but all to no purpose; and in July a proclamation was made ordering the instant collection of the tenth and twentieth pence. The Estates met and refused, the Brussels shopkeepers were obdurate. Alva ordered eighteen bakers and brewers to be hanged before their own premises as an example. Still no money came in; the shops closed; the people met in open places and pledged themselves not to pay. With not a soul on his side the Duke was helpless. Almost simultaneously Philip, whose nephew Don John had just defeated the Turks at Lepanto, finally gave the Duke of Medina Celi his commission to succeed Alva.

Alva's difficulties were William the Silent's opportunities. Whilst the Duke was perpetually smoking

with anger at his failure to impose what his own countryman Alava, ambassador at Paris, called "this cursed tenth penny," and whilst, as Alava informed Philip, all the people were crying, "He must go, he must go, he must go," William's agents, unable to get help from Sweden or Denmark, France or England, were stirring up sympathy in Germany and circulating in the Netherlands a personal appeal from him—the "Harangue". But funds, as William lamented, came in slowly from the poverty-stricken, and it was not from the Rhine that the next blow for liberty, after the long crouch, was aimed. It was delivered, almost fortuitously, quite without deliberation, altogether without William's fore-knowledge, by the little rabble of corsair-patriots who had for two years been terrorizing the narrow seas. During the latter part of 1571 four and twenty small ships under the big-bearded buccaneer Lumey de la Marck had been roving around the English coast, the ports of which Elizabeth tacitly allowed them to use. In the succeeding spring Alva's protests became too strong longer to be ignored. Burleigh and Elizabeth were most anxious to avoid war and the order—albeit, with something of a flexion of the eyelid—was given to the Dutchmen to be off, further supplies from shore being forbidden them. De la Marck had no alternative but to sail; but what was he to do for food? He left Dover with his fleet at the end of March, captured some Spanish merchantmen on Palm Sunday and then, steering for Enkhuisen, was driven by stress of weather into the Meuse estuary. Opposite him, on one of the outermost islands of the flat Belgian archipelago lay the small town of Brill. The ships held onwards. The burghers of Brill, quaking at the portent, sent out Peter Koppelstock, a ferryman, to inquire the strangers' purpose, and Koppelstock boarded the vessel of the Seigneur de Treslong. The Beggars had thus far only

thought of demanding provisions ; but Treslong had a flash of inspiration, and Koppelstock, who was luckily anti-Spanish, was bidden return to inform the city fathers that instant surrender was required by patriots who had come to overthrow Duke Alva and his tenth penny. Resistance might have been made, but Koppelstock ingeniously magnified the numbers of the Beggars by ten and the port yielded without a blow. No harm was done the people, though priests were tortured and killed and churches ransacked ; after which the hirsute ruffian of an Admiral formally took possession of Brill in the name of the Prince of Orange.

CHAPTER XII

THE SPREADING OF THE FLAME

ALL Protestantism rang with joy at the capture of Brill. The bells were pealed in England.¹ In France offers of help poured in upon Louis of Nassau. Throughout the Netherlands exultation was unconcealed and the streets were strewn with rough caricatures of Duke Alva losing his spectacles ("brill"), and distractedly uttering his characteristic comment: "No es nada"—"It is nothing". William of Orange was for a moment dubious about the exploit. It was small in itself; it might lead to nothing, and any day a messenger might bring news of Brill's recapture. De la Marck besides might easily plunge into courses which should make the name of Reformer stink in the nostrils of the most favourably-minded. "For albeit he was valiant and liberall, yet was hee lascivious, wilfull and obstinate; in such sort that he would enjoy any wench or woman that pleased him. Also hee called an abbot and his fryers into a chamber, where he forced them to denie their masse and to preach against it, in case they would not be hanged. Besides these he committed many other disorders; so as his insolency had almost thrust the Prince out of Holland."² Soon, however, it became evident that more than a most isolated and casual success had been achieved. Bossu, Wil-

¹ Burleigh wrote Walsingham that it was now or never with the Prince.

² R. Williams. Had it not been for Treslong's advice de la Marck would have burnt Brill and sailed away.

THE
AMERICAN

liam's successor as Stadtholder of Holland, Zeeland, and Utrecht, was sent against Brill by the exasperated Alva. The inhabitants pierced the dykes, fired some of the Spanish ships and frightened the besiegers away. Bossu went on to Rotterdam. It was not in revolt, but closed its gates against his ruffianly soldiery. He forced his way in; and a horrible massacre ensued. But the uprising spread. Flushing, which was of crucial importance because of its situation at the Scheldt mouth and the fortifications of which Alva by a fatal error had postponed,¹ rose at the call of the Seigneur de Herpt, and drove its garrison out. Spanish ships lying in the offing fled before a couple of chance cannon-shots fired by a drunken loon in consideration of a pot of beer. A message was sent to de la Marck, and he came from Brill with three ships, his men arrayed in resplendent canonicals, gold and white and crimson, pillaged from the Brill churches. Arrived, they executed Pacheco, Alva's great engineer, who had inadvertently come at an inopportune moment with the plans for a great Flushing citadel. Through Holland and Zeeland and Friesland, the report thrilled and everywhere men rose. Walcheren was won, Enkhuisen, Edam, Oudewater revolted, Haarlem and Leyden, Dort and Gorcum, Gouda and Alkmaar on its low, sandy perch between North Sea and Zuyder. Almost every important town, not merely in William's old stadtholderate but also in Guelderland and Overijssel flung off the yoke and declared for Orange as deputy of Philip the King—for, as Motley says, "on this basis rested the whole provisional polity". The North was almost solid. France

¹ It had nothing but "a lowe greene rampier" and no cannons towards the land "unlesse it were some paultry rusty olde clinkes which a man would as readily choose in a maner to stand before as behinde at their going off". Time cannot stale this joke.

was more lavish than ever with her promises of support. Elizabeth of England—anxious, alas, not so much for the success of Calvinists whom she disliked (and certainly not for the establishment of a French suzerainty in the Netherlands) as for the continuance of strife, the maintenance of the balance of impotence in the land which faced hers across the sea—smiled amicably. Never since the outbreak of the rebellion had the prospect been so bright. William saw that his chance had come. A bare fortnight after Brill had been taken he despatched from Germany a manifesto to the Netherlands, recounting the manifold oppressions of the blood-thirsty foreigner and the inquisition, and summoned them to recover their rights, at the same time sending special messages to the citizens of town after town which had taken the oath to his name. The seven Provinces were his and the seaboard; he was again preparing for immediate invasion.

Naturally it was the impetuous brother Louis who first took the field. No sooner had the news of Brill reached him in France than he collected 1000 foot and 500 horse—equipment for a mere raid—and, without warning, crossed the border near the important town of Mons, the chief city of Hainault. On 23 May his confederate Oliver, a mapmaker in Alva's employ, surreptitiously conveyed three wagon loads of arquebuses into the town and discovered that the gates (for the place was strongly walled) might be opened at first dawn with the help of a *douceur* to the porter. Next morning with fifty men the headstrong Nassau clattered in, after striking the hapless porter dead, shouting: "The Prince is coming! Down with Alva!" The little troop wandered round the streets awhile. The town was rousing, but the main army had not followed. Louis, alarmed, went out again into the woods to find

them lost amid the confusing trees. Back he came with them, each cavalry man with a foot soldier mounted behind him; and just as the drawbridge was being hoisted up the first horse's weight fell on it. The riders poured in and the town was won.

Making straight for the market-place Louis had the great bell tolled; the citizens and magistrates assembled. He and the Huguenot Count Genlis made speeches to them, explaining the motives of their invasion, and endeavouring by touching their patriotism to induce them to take the oath to Orange and Philip. The cowed dignitaries dared not. But privately many of them supplied Louis with money, and within a few days his critical situation (which wisely he did not accentuate by any deed of violence or persecution save in the manner of confiscating Church treasure) was relieved by the arrival of nearly 5000 French.

Blows were raining in upon the Viceroy at Brussels. First Brill; then Flushing; then a host of towns throughout the North; then Mons the great stronghold of the South. The Sea Beggars, waxing audacious, attacked the convoy of Lisbon galleons brought by the Duke of Medina Celi, and captured half a million crowns-worth of coin and merchandise. Never more resolute than when in desperate straits, the Duke forced himself to do what done earlier might have saved him, namely, revoked the tenth penny; and sent his son Don Frederic of Toledo with 4000 men to invest Mons, and murderers to poison Louis. The Count, who perhaps might have done better had he after taking Mons gone out to organize further onslaughts, or pushed on into the heart of a country ripe for revolt, was hemmed in. He despatched Genlis in hot haste to fetch the promised reinforcements from France, and waited anxiously.

William in Germany pushed on with the last pre-

liminaries for war. From the Huguenots, from Charles, from the Dutch, from refugees in England and elsewhere money, albeit all too little, came in for his mercenaries, and the fleet was fat with plunder and well able to look after itself. He went for more supplies to Frankfort, but the German Princes, miserly enough at any time, tightened their purse-strings against him on the receipt of an unmistakable warning from the Emperor Maximilian. As June was ending, in high summer, he left the ancestral shadows of Dillenburg with 1000 horse and marched towards the Rhine, collecting his men as he went. Westward lay all his hopes, the awakened Provinces which had sworn him fealty. Over there Philip St. Aldegonde was busy stimulating the national and Protestant feeling of the folk; issuing pamphlets ("La ruche de miel de la sainte eglise romaine," for example), in which he "mit la religion en rabelaiserie"; publishing abroad his stirring song, "Wilhelmus von Nassauwe," which with its fine bold words and thunderous strains blew across land and sea like a great vivifying gale; drawing with his eloquence grants from the Estates, which, ignoring Alva's summons¹ and responding to William's, had met at Dort.

A week before those Estates, roused to a great height of fervour by a stirring oration from St. Aldegonde, had finally invested Orange with the powers of a dictator, voted him regular taxes in addition to the loans, public and private, which were freely offered, and accepted de la Marck as his deputy with full powers, William (7 July) reached the Rhine at Duisburg with upwards of 25,000 men. They were a motley army; partly Dutch refugees, mainly uncouth mercenaries who already grumbled for lack of money and were only partially appeased. Next day he wrote Louis:—

¹ To hear the tenth penny revoked.

“ At Antwerp they say that the Duke of Alva will shortly have you in his clutches alive or dead ; but the Eternal who is our guard and protector will laugh at their schemes and fling them into the pit they have digged. Touching my own news, I hope, with God’s help, this day to cross the Rhine . . . almost all Holland has declared for me . . . Dort has accepted our garrison . . . Tergault has followed its example as has Gorcum and de Lowestain has been taken by our people by force.”

At Aldenhoven a messenger reached him—just as before his previous invasion—from the Emperor. Maximilian peremptorily forbade the enterprise, and, as on the earlier occasion, William replied (after some delay) that nothing less than war could save his country and her liberties. “ Your Majesty,” he wrote, “ is known by all for a wise and prudent man.” Maximilian himself had pronounced the “ imperieuse et haultaine administration ” of Alva to be “ fort pernicieuse ” for these countries :—

“ I have had to take arms for my just defence against this cruel Duke of Alva and his gang and against the incredible tyranny which he has for years exercised in the low countries over people of every degree . . . All our efforts were useless so that I and my friends had no course if we did not wish the ruin and misery of our beloved country, the total loss of its privileges, liberties, immunities and jurisdictions under Alva’s unsupportable yoke . . . I bring Christian pity to the oppressed people. I cannot remain unmoved by their tears and their heart-rending cries for help. And I am bound by the oath I took for the preservation of the King’s hereditary provinces.”

On 23 July he took Roermond, where although only three or four citizens were killed and private property

was spared, his uncontrollable horde of soldiers, inflamed after an arduous night assault, murdered and plundered many of the Churchmen who abounded there. Unable to pay them he was unable to check them, but he hoped they would be "more easy and tractable" now they had got loot, and proclaimed death for all who in future should commit like barbarities upon priest or layman, Catholic or Protestant. After this success the outlook darkened again. Ill-tidings came of Genlis. The Huguenot, rashly confident, had been trapped and cut to pieces before Mons by Don Frederic. William's men refused to move without the money which had not yet come from the Estates, and for a month he had to remain at Roermond and Hellenade, eating his brave heart out whilst his brother, beset by foes, lay uncoured within Mons. "My affairs over here," he tells John on 5 August, "are as they were when I last wrote by the Essen messenger—who has not yet returned. I have not yet received a single farthing for my Ritters, so you may imagine what trouble I am in; daily I am told that I shall get money but the money never comes. Still, I leave it to God who has led me thus far and who I know will never desert his just quarrel and righteous cause however he delays." And six days later a letter goes to Louis:—

"I assure you I have not yet received a farthing . . . but a letter has come from the Admiral [Coligny] saying that in spite of the overthrow and defeat of the other French he is raising another 12,000 arquebusiers and 3000 horse, he himself intending to come with them. This I hope will mean much good to us. Also the Admiral bids me not lightly to risk a conflict with the enemy until with God's aid we have managed to effect a junction."

At last, on 27 August, delegates from Dort brought

the long-expected money ; and just then, too, came Colonel Mandelsoo from Germany with reinforcements. The troops were reassured and the Prince led them across the Meuse and kept on through Diest, Tirlmont, Louvain, Mechlin, Termonde, and Oudenarde, leaving garrisons as he went, and taking heavy fines where, as at Louvain, the townspeople would not swear allegiance to him. Brussels was, as yet, too strong to be attacked, but Coligny and the large army he was getting together with the full approval of his King would soon arrive. With William's forces and Coligny's 15,000 Huguenots moving in combination towards the capital, with Don Frederic tethered to the walls of Mons, with the Beggars blockading the coast, and rebellion or disaffection rife everywhere in the Provinces, there seemed to be every chance that the Netherlands would speedily be delivered.

Coligny was already dead, and the warriors he would have brought with him lay bloody and stark in Paris streets. Three days before Orange crossed the Meuse the red nuptials of Henry of Navarre had been consummated with the fearful slaughter of St. Bartholomew. The last and dreadest twist in Catherine de Medici's tortuous domestic policy had been taken. For two years the Huguenots had been growing in power at Court. Right up to the very eve of the massacre Coligny's ascendancy over Charles had seemed unshaken, and the triumph of his policy at home and abroad was thought assured. Catherine, driven to a last desperate stroke, flung herself over to the side of the Guises, wrenched from her wretched son consent to a massacre—and with the suddenness and violence of a great natural calamity Murder smote to the dust the Huguenots in Paris and through all the cities of France. Though this most Christian and Catholic act redounding to God's

glory gave Philip ecstatic delight, and though scenes of wild rejoicing occurred in the camp before Mons, there was no question of an arrangement between the French and either Alva or the Spanish King, an arrangement such as had been contemplated by Henry the Second in the Bois de Vincennes. The crime which shocked all Christendom was committed purely for internal motives, and men of neither party abroad had warning of it. In a few months the Gallic Court was scheming as hard as ever to undermine the Spanish power in the Netherlands. But though to William and his friends an active enemy had not been gained, a potent ally had been lost. The Huguenots, never more than a small and strengthless minority in France, would provide no more armies; Charles could never again be trusted. And the moral effects of the catastrophe were terrible. Louis, in his besieged town, apprised by his Spanish foes of the slaughter of his friends, was struck to the marrow with horror and took to a sick bed, racked with fever. And for the Prince, he was aghast, and his heart quailed at "this dreadful and most execrable crime," which had, in his words, "overturned and annihilated the gracious purposes of God".

Yet he must go on though hope had been killed and his troops were on the verge of mutiny. Urgent appeals kept coming in from Louis, and Orange continued his advance, knowing that to turn back would mean leaving his brother to the certainty of capture and the possibility of death. Early in September he neared Mons and camped at Herminguy, half a league from the city and an equal distance from St. Florian where Don Frederic, who had been joined by Alva and Medina Celi, was posted. William's cavalry, as shrewd Alva saw, was superior to that of the Spaniards. With the God of battles on his side he might win a pitched battle. But

Alva, who had been too wary to risk one in 1569 was no more rash in 1572, knowing as he did that time and indecision would shatter William's undisciplined host and that his own men were trusty as steel. Long delays, long marches and countermarches proved not to be needed. On the night of 11 September Julian Romero and a mere handful of men did with a sudden daring thrust what Don Frederic and Alva with their whole army now reinforced by the Brussels garrison might have failed to do in open field. With 600 arquebusiers, shirts over armour, Romero crept through Orange's lines at night. Killing the sentinels, they penetrated into the heart of the camp to the tent where the Prince lay. He was asleep in his clothes. He heard nothing. Death was imminent. A mere chance saved him. "His little dogge, hearing a great noyse, fell a scratching and crying and withal leaping on the Prince's face".¹ William sprang up in the darkness and rushed out. A horse was ready; he leapt on its back and rode off—only just in time as his whole bodyguard was butchered where it stood. The uproar grew and still Romero's men hacked and stabbed and hewed. Then at last some of them, maddened with blood, set fire to tents; the blaze revealed the smallness of their numbers and they had to pelt off. But Orange with his four and twenty thousand had to retreat as well. His Ritters refused point-blank—"tout-à-plat"—to go on to Mons. When success had seemed assured William's second great effort, the crown of years of scheming, had failed; and through no fault of his own. Writing to Louis to inform him of the wreck of the expedition—he tried to cheer him with good tidings from the North, proof of God's favour—he retraced his steps through

¹ He always kept "one of that dog's race" until his dying day. They were "white little hounds with crooked noses, called Camuses".

Nivelles towards the Meuse, with an assassin sent by Alva lurking all the way in his train. His troops broke out into mutiny. They had no pay and were half-starved. "My men," John at Dillenburg read in a letter of 24 September, "have been seized with panic so that I have been forced to bring them back ; which in any case lack of provisions would have compelled me to do." He checked the mutineers temporarily, it is said, by declaring that his brother John had arrived with 500 knights at Roermond, bearing great treasure sent by Denmark, England, and the German Princes. He crossed the Meuse ; they rose again, seethed round him, threatened to kill him and were barely restrained by his devoted officers. Finally he sold the last remnants of his military stores to appease them ; then most deserted him or were dismissed. At Roermond, where he stayed for four days, he saw Louis, who had got away, an invalid, from Mons. After bidding him farewell, retaining but a handful of men he turned north to Zutphen in Guelderland, where he left a small garrison, and thence to Kampen on the east coast of the Zuyder Zee, sadly observing as he went that universally despondence bordering on despair had overtaken his partisans, so that the towns he left behind him fell away immediately he was out of sight, from the great fear they had of the Spaniards. "I fear," ran his despatch to John from Zwoll (18 Oct. 1572), "I shall be alone and deserted unless God work a miracle . . . for immediately I left Roermond the soldiers abandoned it ; their example was followed by those of Wachlendonc who from the first had not wished to let me into the town unless with but 7 or 8 horse and then did not want to let me go out without being paid ; but afterwards, it was noised about that the enemy were in the neighbourhood, which rumour although false was so efficacious that reversing their

previous attitude they even begged and prayed me to go . . . I am now resolved to go over to Holland and Zeeland to keep things going there as well as I can, 'ayant délibéré de faire illecq ma sepulture'—having determined there to make my sepulchre." From Kampen with his little suite he took ship across the Zuyder to Enkhuisen on the eastmost spur of the Holland peninsula, and thence he worked his way south to Dort (Dordrecht) which he reached in November. After nearly six years' absence he was once more in his old stadtholderate in the heart of the Provinces.

Mons, reduced to the last extremity and with its chief defender seriously ill, had capitulated a week after William's retreat. Most generous terms were offered by Alva, as he was anxious, with Holland and Zeeland in open rebellion, to be away from Hainault as soon as possible. Louis and all his troops were to go free with all their belongings, and such citizens as were Protestants or had borne arms against the King were to leave Mons with them. Hostages were given as guarantees by both sides. In part the agreement was faithfully carried out by the Spaniard. He wished, not necessarily from humanitarian motives, that his conduct should present a striking contrast to that of the authors of St. Bartholomew; and possibly under the circumstances some incomprehensible code of chivalry affected his relations with the young Count whom his agents had been commissioned to murder and whose companions, not many years before, he had betrayed and murdered, after inveigling them with a show of friendship. Whatever the reason, Louis was received with exaggerated honour in the Spanish camp, the hidalgos vieing in polite obsequiousness, which he took at its proper valuation. Unable to walk, the stricken hero was carried through Liège to Maestricht, up the Meuse to Roermond (where

he saw William) and so southward to Dillenburg and his mother's brooding care. His Germans and a few French went with him; the rest of the Huguenots, deaf to his pleas and warnings, foolishly made for their own country, on the frontiers of which they were annihilated by the orders of their King, who had previously striven to get Alva to massacre them at Mons, *whither they had gone with his own connivance as he and everybody knew!* But for the wretched inhabitants of Mons there was neither good faith nor chivalry and mercy. They had—grim lot of all border towns—been occupied in the first instance through no fault of their own and now the penalty of their innocence was terrible. Noircarmes, greedy for the spoil of the condemned, came and for a year the infernal fiend was busy. Motley's industry has collected a mass of details from the judicial archives:—

“Some were beheaded, some were hanged, some were burned alive. All who had borne arms or worked at the fortifications were, of course, put to death. Such as refused to confess and receive the Catholic sacraments perished by fire. A poor wretch, accused of having ridiculed these mysteries, had his tongue torn out before being beheaded. A cobbler, named Blaise Bouzet, was hanged for having eaten meat-soup upon Friday. He was also accused of going to the Protestant preachings for the sake of participating in the alms distributed on these occasions, a crime for which many other paupers were executed. An old man of sixty-two was sent to the scaffold for having permitted his son to bear arms among the volunteers. At last, when all pretexts were wanting to justify executions, the council assigned as motives for its decrees an adhesion of heart on the part of the victims to the cause of the insurgents, or to the doctrines of the Reformed Church. Ten, twelve, twenty persons were often hanged, burned, or beheaded in a single day. Gibbets laden with mutilated bodies

lined the public highways, while Noircarmes, by frightful expressions of approbation, excited without ceasing the fury of his satellites.”¹

Such was the punishment of Mons, but Alva and his son did not stay to see it. Don Frederic marched his troops to Mechlin of which he had resolved to make an example. It was sacked with every atrocity known even to that age. Flanders and Brabant were terrified into silence; Zeeland, Holland and their accomplice Provinces must now be dealt with. Zutphen and Naarden, through which Orange had passed, were taken first. They held out bravely, but not for long. “Men say,” the sick Louis heard from his brother-in-law Nuenar, “that on Sunday a great cry and the sound of killing arose from Zutphen, but we know not what it was.” “Scarcely life or chastity remained”; Don Frederic spared neither man, woman, nor child; and at Naarden, as Alva wrote to the delighted fanatic at Madrid, “they cut the throats of townsmen and soldiers and not a man escaped alive”. Friesland lost heart and yielded; Overysse and Guelderland were betrayed through the cowardly flight of Van der Berg, who had married Mary, sister of the Nassaus. Even the archipelago at the mouth of Scheldt and Rhine was in danger; old Colonel Mondragon and his 3000 saving for Alva besieged Tergoes by one of the most memorable feats of the century, marching the ten miles between the mainland and Beveland at dead of night between the tides through water often above the breast. Don Frederic, after razing Naarden to the ground, went to Amsterdam which alone in its Province remained royalist; and then with 30,000 men (Dec., 1572), marched on Haarlem and surrounded it.

¹ “Rise of the Dutch Republic,” part iii. chap. 7.

Holland was now the focus of the great struggle. North and south, east and west, the broken cities and Provinces had fallen away. This one low tapering strip of sandy soil, dotted with ancient towns and seaports, peopled with a race poor but rougher and sturdier than any in Europe, held liberty and religion, cause and Prince in trust. The end of Holland would be the end of all, and, as that icy winter drew on, Spaniards and Dutch steeled themselves for a prolonged and desperate trial of strength and unrelenting endurance. What were the odds? Alva had at his back the treasure of Spain and the Indies, of the rich Catholic provinces in the Netherlands, 50,000 fearless veterans hardened by years of toil and bloodshed, adaptable to all changing conditions of warfare and climate, officered by the most experienced soldiers in Europe. Twice he had beaten back the Prince of Orange when William had led great armies into a rebellious country and had had help from every neighbouring nation ; and now almost every Province of the Spanish Netherlands was crushed and cowed and nerveless and would not stir. Every ounce of weight could be concentrated upon the little water-logged country, where a pauper Prince, with no money and no disciplined troops, was speeding from town to town and village to village, striving to organize his little population of fishermen and burghers into some semblance of a defensive force, conferring with little local delegates, raising little hasty ramparts, squeezing pence from exhausted purses. But there behind it all was the sea by which the Hollanders lived, a rough mother but not careless of her children. And there was too that quenchless spirit of freedom and defiance which would rather a thousand deaths than humiliation and submission. And though the waters were flung upon the land and hunger and sword ravaged, though on that small people

the burden of a great tribulation pressed for years with agonizing weight, the light of liberty in Holland was never dimmed, and out of her pangs and extremities the Dutch Republic, a world's wonder, was born.

CHAPTER XIII

THE STAND IN HOLLAND

ON his way through Holland from Enkhuisen William had passed through Haarlem, ten miles west of Amsterdam, where he had harangued the citizens, bidding them resist the approaching Spaniards. According to Motley he also held a secret session of the States where secret plans of defence—possibly based on foreign negotiations that could not be divulged—were discussed, of which no records have been preserved. A month after he had steeled the communal soul of the city, Don Frederic, who had been resting at Amsterdam, invested it, purposing to serve it as Naarden and Zutphen had been served. The inhabitants were strung up for a supreme effort. Cowardly magistrates who tried to treat with the enemy were killed; stores were brought in until the last approach was blocked; every man had his military duty assigned, and even the women were organized into armed companies which fought magnificently throughout the siege. Completely surrounded by Spaniards, almost completely by water—for the dyke-stemmed sea was but five miles off on the west, the estuary lay to the north-east, and east and south was the broad shallow Haarlem lake—the town was almost impossible of relief. Don Frederic had 30,000 men; in the city were but 4000, including the foreign contingents, and these as month after month went by were half-starved. Yet the Spaniard could

not take the place. He bombarded it for three days and made a general assault. The church bells clanged, and the furious populace surged out *en masse* and drove him back. He breached the walls only to find new barriers of rubble and fragments of holy statues risen behind them, and his men quailed and retreated before a gale of stones and flaming tar. Minor skirmishes took place daily. Never sun set but some sudden onslaught or desperate sally was made with horrible carnage; never dawn broke but the pallid defenders on their ramparts saw the Spanish gallows outside laden with fresh corpses of comrades who had fallen into the enemy's hands. The more their sufferings and the more profuse the blood shed, the more awful their spirit and the more ghastly their jests. Don Frederic, Alva himself, was astonished. Not on sea or land, he told Philip, had such a conflict as this been known. Not once in history had so amazing a resistance against colossal odds been made as was made by this old town with its crumbling walls amid the mists and the marshes. Yet the Dutch war itself was to produce its parallel.

All Holland watched the siege; and William, whose head-quarters were at Sassenheim across the lake, was sleepless in his endeavours to raise it. In December (1572) he collected 4000 men at Leyden, and sent de la Marck with them towards Haarlem. In a heavy snowstorm they were surprised and routed by Bossu and Noircarmes. Then a gleam of hope came with the offer of disaffected Spanish soldiers to betray their commander for 40,000 guilders; the Prince could not raise the money, and the opportunity slipped away. In intense anxiety he beat himself against the walls of anxious thought and vain scheming, knowing that without new resources nothing could be done. His brothers in Germany were the last chance.

“The folk of Haarlem” [ran a letter to Louis in March, 1573], “still hold out nobly; but always we lack money and ammunition, and the country is growing impoverished and the people weary of war so that they go sluggishly about their duty. You may imagine, therefore, that in the long run we shall be hard put to it to hold the enemy off. I see no means in the world of raising the siege of Haarlem. Cannot you do something over there? I do assure you it would be a piteous thing to allow perish so many worthy men who in their valour have surpassed the common virtue of men.”

And again he appeals to John and Louis in May:—

“I beg you earnestly to do your utmost to deliver Haarlem which is so hard pressed by the the enemy that if we do not speedily come to its help a great disaster must overtake us which might involve our complete overthrow not so much through the loss of this one town as for that of so many good soldiers and citizens and the despair with which other towns will be infected; which will think that since we have been able to do nothing for this town which has so valiantly and so long held out (to the great relief of the rest of the country) certainly other places will await help from us in vain.”

Now and then Orange would send a small detachment of men across the lake by night with food, or a pigeon with a letter cheering the surrounded folk, bidding them keep up their spirits, and trust in the unceasing effort of their brethren and himself to rescue them. He left nothing undone which might save the town. Racked by the thought of what must happen to the heroic but doomed city he sent Boisot to Elizabeth for help, and even begged his brothers to discover whether a peace on the basis of free conscience and an amnesty might not be made with the King. The Dutch burghers, tired of

hardship and sacrifice, were growing dispirited ; unable by force to do anything for Haarlem, William went from place to place addressing assemblies, heartening them.¹ Spring wore on into summer, and as the citizens still held their butchers at bay a frantic horror and desire to do something seized their countrymen. Public feeling demanded that ceaseless attempts at rescue must be made. On the lake William's little ships tackled the enemy daily ; party after party, miserably small, was sent to break through Haarlem's periphery of pikes and cannon. General Sonoy went with a few thousand to sever and flood the causeway between Haarlem and Amsterdam ; he failed and his force was cut to pieces.² In July the townspeople asked for terms ; unconditional surrender was all Frederic would listen to and the despairing Haarlemers, now staying the pangs of their empty stomach with old shoes, garbage, and the remains of rats and cats, sent a last appeal to William, written in human blood. They hoisted a black banner symbolising the great death whose wings overspread them ; a pigeon flew in with the news that William was sending another army could they but wait, and they hauled their grim pavilion down. Aware that all he could do would be of no avail, the Prince, giving way to the popular clamour, offered to lead volunteers in a forlorn hope. Five thousand came forward ; they refused to allow William to risk his life, and the command was given to Baron Batenburg. The army reached the Spanish lines at midnight, was trapped by a strategem and annihilated. Haarlem's fate was sealed. In the second week of July

¹ Roger Williams puts it tersely : " The poore Prince " was anxious to do something for Haarlem and " having no other means he went to Publick Banquets where he encouraged the Hollanders ".

² Amongst the captured was Antony Oliver, the official painter who had helped Louis at Mons, and whose head was now thrown over Haarlem walls.

Don Frederic, fearing that the citizens would burn themselves and their town in a general conflagration, offered mercy. On the 12th he was admitted, and at once began a general massacre. Even, says Le Petit, the Scotch, English, and French soldiers were killed, "tous justiciez, les gentilhommes par l'épée, les autres par la corde ou plongez en mer".

The Spaniard went northward to Alkmaar in pursuance of his plan of reducing the insurgent little Province, town by town, thoroughly. Alkmaar had been given a small garrison by William ("those within have good courage, I have sent several companies to aid them"), but all told its defenders numbered a mere couple of thousand against the 16,000 Don Frederic was now leading, and Orange expected them to be easily overwhelmed and quailed to think of what was before them. Alva, whom the resistance of Haarlem and his own impending dismissal had stung to fury, saw to it that his son should surround Alkmaar so that "not even a sparrow could enter or leave it," and wrote to Philip that, as the merciful example shown at Haarlem had proved ineffectual, every man, woman, and child in Alkmaar should have a slit throat. Roger Williams avers that some of the town's best defenders told him that the people's hearts had sunk so low that, had a gap been left in the besieging ring, they would have run away. Every avenue of flight closed, they resolved to sell their lives dear. A tremendous assault on 18 September was repelled, the Spaniards leaving 1000 dead under the walls. A bombardment next day had so little effect that Frederic's superstitious veterans, thinking these frenzied fisherfolk to be devils from hell, grew mutinous; and three weeks later, Orange's governor, Sonoy, having (at William's orders) opened some of the dykes, Alva's progeny raised the siege and led his army away to

Amsterdam through the shin-deep waters. At the same time the Zeelanders had some success in the south and took William's town of Gertruydenberg in Brabant, and the Sea Beggars under Dirkzoon smashed the royalist fleet off Enkhuizen and captured the detested Count Bossu, who could be set off against St. Aldegonde recently taken by the enemy at Maaslandsluis. "The enemy," went William's account to Louis, "has retired very shamefaced from Alkmaar, and having already had such a bad beating on the Zuyder Zee has fallen back on the Hague whence he hopes to drive back our forces in Zeeland and Waterland and devastate the country over there."

Though his life was not to be imperilled in the field William had been actively organizing the military operations not merely in North Holland but southwards. There several Spanish raids were beaten off, "which," he observed with satisfaction in August, "will lower the pride of our enemies who thought after the surrender (of Haarlem) to swallow us whole; but they will find us, I think, a tough matter". His appeals for assistance poured out in floods. September saw Alva summoning the estates to Brussels to vote supplies for the continuance of the war. Orange answered his summons with a stirring manifesto to all the Provinces on behalf of Holland and Zeeland, simultaneously circulating in Europe another manifesto, the cry of a man and a country who would rather die the death than yield to the foreigner those rights that former Princes had granted. Surely Holland and Zeeland were not to be left to front their terrible foe alone?

Early in this autumn of 1573 also he embraced the Calvinist creed. "Brothers," rejoiced B. Wilhelmi, a Dort minister, in an epistle to the congregation at London, "I must tell you that by the blessing of God the

Prince of Orange, our pious stadtholder, has come into the communion and has broken the bread of the Lord and submitted to the discipline ; which is no small thing to chronicle." Once more change of religion (or, more justly, of Church) had been dictated by political exigencies. These Dutch Calvinists were bigots, and perfect trust in the Prince was impossible for them as long as he remained a Lutheran ; even after he joined their society they grumbled at his over-tenderness towards the adherents of other creeds. There is no trace in William's letters of wrestlings over doctrine. "The difference is too small to keep you apart," he once said to the wrangling sectarians ; he was a genuinely religious man, but his Christianity was of a larger mould than theirs. Fanaticism, as it afflicted the Catholics, and as it was manifested in those fervent Hollanders in the besieged towns, who tortured and murdered their prisoners even when their own end stared them in the face, was to William not merely strange but abominable. When de la Marck's atrocities against the orthodox became too flagrant William did what few commanders of his time would have done : dismissed and imprisoned an active and able, albeit scoundrelly, captain. It astonished him, he said afterwards in his "Apologie," that his enemies should have had the insolence and folly to accuse him of persecuting Catholics : "They are not ashamed to plead against me the massacres of men of their church when not only do they know that my whole nature is revolted by such things, but when it is notorious to all men that on account of such excesses as they impute to me several were executed by my order, and others of high rank . . . imprisoned long and then released solely for their families' sakes". Averse from violence of thought as from violence of deed, he stands as the supreme type of the humane and tolerant man ;

and the depth and nobility of his religion enabled him, from political motives, to transfer himself from doctrinal camp to camp with just that ease that would be—and, in the case of such men as Henry of Navarre, was—the result of a total lack of serious religious feeling. Breadth was the distinguishing mark of his outlook: let the broken fragments of Christendom unite, and if they could not unite let them at least lie side by side in peace. Never could bitterness of spirit, hate, persecution, cruelty, or bloodshed please the Almighty or promote His kingdom.

So he became a Calvinist, and perhaps in his very great loneliness—his brothers were no longer with him, his wife was mad in her distant Saxon dungeon, St. Aldegonde was a prisoner, and in his correspondence he would now and again break forth into sad expressions of his desire for friends near him—it was perhaps a consolation to join as a brother in the services and prayers of the common Dutch folk among whom he was living. “I must have help,” he declared in August, “as I cannot alone sustain so great a load of public business, affairs of war, of finance, and so on. I have not a man to assist me, no, not a man, and you can imagine what a state I am in.”

All this year, too, he was occupied with incessant schemes for obtaining foreign aid—any foreign aid at any price save the forfeiture of the cherished civic rights and freedom of worship of the people whose interests were in his charge. A vast mesh of international intrigue involving almost every Power of Europe was woven with the Netherlands as its centre. The thousands of documents that have been preserved in the various capitals blaze a compelling light upon the perfidy and selfishness of the diplomacy of the time. Immediately after St. Bartholomew William threw himself

with all his energy into the negotiations with Elizabeth. She could have the protectorate of Holland and Zeeland and devoted service from himself would she but send over to help them. There was a strong pro-Dutch party in England, and Walsingham, who had gone to Paris as ambassador in 1570 and had there kept up relations with the Nassaus, was keenly for armed intervention. But Elizabeth, strong in the support of cautious Burleigh, managed for twenty years to resist the desires of many of her counsellors and, probably, of the majority of her subjects. She had no intrinsic interest in the Dutch struggle for freedom. She was the friend of no country but her own. The attempt of Sovereigns to monopolize power was producing the theory or at least the practice of balancing it. The Queen, with a strong plotting element in her realm, dare not risk a war with Spain. At the same time it was to her interest that Spain's troubles in the Netherlands should not cease lest the Low Countries should become the base of a twofold attack upon England. Again there was the consideration that if she did not assist William France, always on the *qui vive*, might suddenly espouse his cause with all her forces and obtain power in the Provinces; the prospect of a French suzerainty of the Netherlands was contemplated with no less dread than their complete subjection to Spain. The resultant of all these various factors was a policy wavering, see-sawing, never very pronouncedly coloured. Sometimes she was in close though mistrustful confabulation with Alva. Sometimes—as in this very year of 1573, when Philip and Alva fearing an Anglo-German-French-Dutch coalition again threw open their ports to English ships on very favourable terms—she cast the Dutch off altogether for a time. But generally speaking, though she did little openly,—under the royal seal, so to speak,—yet she allowed

assistance from England to be eked out throughout the wars. The raid which ended in the seizure of Brill was connived at by her. Large sums of money from time to time percolated from England to William's war-chest. Adventurous English captains with small companies were continually crossing the narrow seas; and the "red casaques" worn by their men, as by the Scots, became a well-known feature in the Provinces.¹ Just after Brill Sir Humphrey Gilbert with 1400 men attempted to take Sluys. Louis had English as well as Scots in Mons, there were English in Haarlem, and the garrison at Flushing partly consisted of English² who, unlike the Dutch and Walloons (who lived rapaciously on the burghers), had not been "in the warres before" and "were rawe and looked for no more than bare victuals, lodgings, and promise of pay; whereupon the Burgesses grew in great liking for our nation". Thomas Morgan, Colonel Chester, Norice, the Bingham, Roger Williams, many another doughty Englishman fought in the service of the revolted States. But they were William's mercenaries, not the Queen's soldiers. She herself would parley, hint at help, dole out subsidies; but, on occasion, with the cynicism of patriotism, she would desert.

For a short time William even conducted an indirect and abortive negotiation with Philip. Not that Philip had softened towards the rebels or towards the Prince. The Spanish official policy regarding the latter is admirably summarized in a letter of February, 1573, written by Alva's secretary, Albornoz, to G. de Cayas, the Secretary of State: "He who brought the head of the

¹ For copious information relative to the English and Scots companies, *v.* James Fergusson's "The Scots Brigade" (Scot. Hist. Soc.).

² There had been a faire muster of Londoners before the queen's Majestie at Greenwich—and captain T. Morgan with gentlemen and 300 soldiers had sailed to Flushing.

Admiral (Coligny?) has offered to strike another who does no less harm to Christendom than that rascal now in hell. He and two others are now there. God help them; it is an enterprise in which they could do him great service and at the same time bring themselves great profit"—*"Dios los ayude! Empresa es en que si le pueden hazer mucho servicio y a si honrra y provecho."* This year, as every year till Orange's life ended, his murder was the thing Philip most constantly hoped and plotted for. But for the moment the King's ambition had overvaulted even his bigotry; he was eager to get the reversion of the Imperial Diadem after Maximilian and knew that the only possible way to the votes of the German Princes was through Orange; and for the moment the sleepless intriguer Louis acted as a go-between. This phase was very transient. William's demands preliminary to all consideration of detailed terms were the same as of old and untenable by the King, and Philip's aspirations towards the Empire were quenched almost as soon as lit.

On France therefore William, as throughout his life, was forced to nail his chiefest hopes. Catherine de Medici and her son themselves made the first advances. They had very soon realised that the massacre of St. Bartholomew was a tactical error; it had put them beyond the pale in the eyes of Protestants all over Europe, and Spain (whatever calculated horror might be expressed by Alva) had been gleeful over it. Catherine had not desired to frustrate her own designs in the Netherlands, and at this particular time William's friendship was essential to her. The elective throne of Poland had fallen vacant at the death of Sigismund Augustus (Jagellon) in 1572. William, then a Lutheran, might have had it; all his affections were elsewhere and he declined to be a candidate. Catherine focussed all

her energies upon securing it for her son Henry, Duke of Anjou (afterwards Henry III); but unless the interest of the Lutheran Princes were gained the throne could never be his. The murderers of St. Bartholomew saw that Orange and his friends could induce the Germans to support them in the Polish election just as Philip saw that only Orange could influence them on his behalf in the Imperial election. So overtures were made and William found it difficult for a while to stifle the disgust he felt for this contemptible French Court. The assurances of Catherine and Charles that the Bartholomew massacre had been committed in a spontaneous burst of popular hate and rage, he valued at what they were worth. Still, he could not afford to make nice discriminations as regarded either men or motives. Every possible ally was selfish; some were more bloodstained than others, all were equally unreliable. Sole paramount object for him was the preservation of his single tract of free land, the safeguarding of the people of the Calvinist Provinces against a return of "these devils of Spaniards," and of the old foul tyranny in an intenser and more execrable form. Subduing the natural aversions of the man, the statesman (although frankly informing the French that his people would be difficult of reconciliation) refused to spurn the aid of any, however base, whose interests might make them valuable allies.

With William's consent Louis, who had never got entirely out of touch with France, resumed negotiations with Charles and Catherine. A long outspoken correspondence passed between the young Count and the debilitated and superstitious King of France. It culminated in a magnificent letter in the early summer of 1573, a letter half-accusation, half-appeal, clothed with thunderous garments of prophecy and doom. In solemn language, swelling with profound feeling, Louis warned

the King how his bloodiness and shiftiness had brought him into contempt.

“To-day your majesty is near ruin, your estate everywhere menaced and a naked prey to whoever cares to assail it; for, through your endeavours to force the consciences of your people, you have stripped yourself of nobility and men-of-war and of that greatest stay of your throne, the love and goodwill of your subjects, so that you are like an ancient building which men support day by day with new props but which cannot be saved from downfall at last . . . Your majesty’s mortal enemy the King of Spain is merry at the wreck of your affairs, and laughs aloud at your misfortunes and does his best to aggravate them. . . . It is evident that the Prince of Orange cannot now think that it is with honest intentions that your Majesty professes a desire to help him . . . Do not bathe in the blood of your subjects, do not complete the ruin that you may always avert by making a good peace in your kingdom and ceasing to torment those of the religion.”

He hopes finally that Charles will recognize the sincerity of his letter.

“I do not flatter you as a bad physician does his patient who tells him only a part of his ailment.”

Charles must turn while yet there is time.

“If you do but that, your fortunes will shine bright again. If you do not, but persist in the old ways, you will only encounter evil and once more band God and men against you.”

This noble and unflinching warning at least did not anger Charles, and he redoubled his promises of assistance. Later in the year Louis saw Alençon, Charles’ brother. “I have seen the Duke of Alençon who,

pressing my hand, whispered that had he this hour sovereignty as has his brother the King of Poland he would do everything in his power to help you. . . . If France and Poland aid us, as they say they will, our affairs will go very well." The terms offered to the French were splendid. They were to have a Protectorate over Holland and Zeeland, and absolute possession of whatever else in the Netherlands they could capture by arms. Louis was promised men and money at once for an immediate expedition. His buoyant spirits soared again.

In December, 1573, Alva at last left the Netherlands, stealing out of Brussels on the night previous to the day which he had named to his creditors as the date on which he would settle his enormous debts. Medina Celi had not superseded him. That grandee, who successfully evaded Louis' attempts to kidnap him in the Rhineland ("ça seroit un bon oiseau en cage," wrote William, who in earlier days had acted with him as a judge in Brussels jousts), did not remain long in the Netherlands, but returned to Spain; and the new governor was Don Luis de Requesens, the "Grand Commander". Alva had grown thoroughly sick of failure. Detested by a whole people as never man was before or since he was not compensated by the confidence or gratitude of his King. Every year had seen him win victories; yet the revolution was gaining strength. He had failed as financier, failed as administrator, failed as soldier; and the heavy losses before Haarlem, his son's repulse from Alkmaar, and Bossu's disastrous naval defeat added a final layer of shadow to his gloom. Leyden was besieged by Don Francis Vargas and could not be taken. Six years before, the grim Duke had been acknowledged the greatest general in Europe. A life's reputation had been blasted by the lightning which

flashed from the soul of a tiny cloud of provincial towns. Alva now was hardly even respected or feared. Viglius and the other councillors dared openly to impeach the wisdom of his policies. He was not able to keep his veteran soldiers in hand; even Catholic bishops were appealing to Madrid in protest against the violence and licentiousness of the regiments, and open mutinies had become frequent. He had to go; yet to the last he personally did not lose faith in the efficacy of his bloody campaign. At Amsterdam that very year he roasted a nobleman, Uitenhoove, to death over a slow fire and secretly murdered in prison the Huguenot Count Genlis. To his thinking his failure was due not to his policy but to the hesitating and merciful way in which he had pursued it. In six years he had executed 18,600 persons with every unnameably gruesome ingenuity of torture; not a village but had known his wheel and his gallows, his rack and his red-hot pincers, and uncounted thousands of Netherlanders had perished in battle or in the sack of cities. Nobles' heads in batches had fallen on the block, aged gentlewomen had been strangled, respectable merchants hanged, burned, and drowned, children slaughtered, women raped. And the last advice of the Duke, before his cross-cropped head with its grooved marble face and iron beard departed and was no more seen in the Low Countries, was that a plan of universal destruction must be undertaken, that every city not permanently garrisoned by Spanish troops must be seized and levelled to the ground and its population exterminated.

Requesens, the new Governor, was a man of quite inferior calibre. His appearance of a well-nourished, self-satisfied person of moderate intelligence and no ideals, did not bely him. A gentleman of mediocre birth, he had gained, through favourable circumstances,

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a bogus reputation for prudence and skill. He was supposed to have helped win over the Turks the great naval victory of Lepanto, and he had achieved the task of keeping order in Milan with seeming moderation. His real natural capacity may be judged when it is said that he considered that the Dutch rebellion had nothing to do with religion and was the mere result of scheming by wily self-seeking demagogues. The Netherlanders, who had heard of his evil popular reputation in Milan, hoped for nothing from his personal initiative. But Philip, who wanted leisure to organize his resources for repression, allowed it to get abroad that a policy of conciliation was to be entered upon ; and at most Requesens could not but seem welcome by contrast with Alva. All Philip had really empowered Requesens to offer was pardon in return for general submission to despotism and Catholicism. William the Silent's terms, as he again and again insisted, were recall of Spanish officials and troops, free exercise of the Protestant religion and restoration of all the old privileges of the land. The chronic deadlock still existed, therefore ; but circumstances conduced to parleyings. William never dared neglect the slightest chance of securing the peace for which the country yearned. Requesens, with the pay of the army in arrears, could do nothing until Philip sent the millions his exhausted treasury was at the moment incapable of supplying. Forty million dollars first and last had been spent in attempting to extinguish rebellion ; with no more irresistible steadiness did Spain suck the wealth from Potosi and Peru than the Netherlands drained it from Spain. And, finally, the Catholic loyalists were as desirous of a cessation of strife as their Protestant compatiots. Even Aerschot and Berlaymont pressed that favourable terms should be accorded the insurgents and the Prince of Orange freely pardoned.

William found himself receiving friendly letters, not merely from Romero, the Spanish butcher of Naarden (who asked an interview, which was discreetly refused), but from the "cruel animal" Noircarmes himself—whom he mildly upbraided for his long treachery to country and the good cause.

The position of the patriots at the close of 1573 was good. Save Haarlem, The Hague, and Amsterdam all Holland was theirs, and in Zeeland only Middelburg (on the island of Walcheren) held out against them under the old tiger Mondragon, the hero of the Tergoes sea-march; and Leyden was easily resisting the siege of Vargas. If Requesens were really willing to treat, the better the military situation of the Reformers the more favourable the terms William would be able to extort from him. As long as active operations continued—and neither party could let them drop until an arrangement was actually in sight—every advantage must be pushed home; and Louis, with the funds he had obtained from the French King, was in Germany raising, with the help of his brothers and the Elector Palatine,¹ an army which was to invade the Eastern Provinces. Nevertheless Orange's anxieties were still manifold. The Dutch had been wonderfully firm and constant. But that same independence of spirit which made them such stubborn enemies made them also rather irritating supporters. The merchants who composed the bulk of the Estates would not submit themselves unreservedly to the Prince's discretion and could not lose their rigid book-keeping tendencies. Save on the gravest emergencies they embarrassed their leader to the point of exasperation by haggling over the money grants, and as those grants were chiefly wanted for the maintenance

¹ A Calvinist and, outside William's family circle, the only German magnate who was genuinely enthusiastic for him from first to last.

of the army—which, unlike the navy, was almost wholly mercenary—William was continually troubled by disaffection and threats of desertion on the part of the troops. Another and more personal cause of worry was the correspondence of his friends. The Landgrave was urging him to throw up the fight while life still remained to save, and counsels of despair were even coming from St. Aldegonde.

The lofty soul of William's closest friend had been sadly crushed by solitary imprisonment. He was near death; the royalists who not infrequently poisoned their captives would, he knew, murder him at any moment should General Bossu chance to escape from the hands of the Dutch. Philip Marnix in his cell—there is no reason to pass, as many have passed, very harsh judgments on his fall—brooded over the seemingly unending struggle, and his own hapless circumstances lent a darker colour to his thoughts. It seemed to him that all the valour and sacrifices and blood of years had been wasted; that he and his comrades had been raining weak blows against the marmoreal face of an inexorable destiny; and in his letters to the friend who was, single-handed, guiding the rebellion in Holland, he poured out the miserable mental vapours that captivity had bred. "They ought," he wrote from his Hague prison on 7 Nov., 1573,

"to try and arrange some good peace, seeing that his majesty will probably not be averse from it, assuming that he would incline to pity and compassion rather than allow his subjects to be utterly ruined. For my part since I see that our religion, which we base simply and solely on the word of God, is so hated and cried down that it is impossible that it should ever have rest in this world without the crosses and persecutions that are insepar-

ably joined to the gospel of Christ, I think it would be better for us to leave all the goods of our fatherland and of this world and go to live in a strange country, holding our souls in patience, rather than to wage a perpetual war which must bring with it all the evils and profanities which provoke the wrath of God . . . More often God manifests his power in our infirmity and our patience than through our arms, though I fear neither our enemies nor death."

William replied on the 28th of the month. He began by assuring him that he was constantly trying to arrange an exchange of prisoners, then went on to refute his arguments. For himself he had a natural love of peace which, indeed, all Christians were bidden ensue—but there were times and seasons when armed resistance was the only possible course.

"I have never desired nor do I now desire anything but the tranquillity and well-being of this country ensured by a good peace. But the cruel injustice and inhumanities, contrary to every law human and divine, which have so long afflicted us and gave rise to the present troubles, have constrained every man, whatever his place and rank, to take arms, not against the King, but in order to guarantee that we shall not finally and for ever be overwhelmed and destroyed by an intolerable servitude and tyranny over bodies, goods, and consciences which must drive most of our people with their wives and children into the woods and forests."

He concluded with a stirring reminder of Spanish treachery, of the "ewich and einich" trick which had sent the old Landgrave to his prison, and with a hope that the Almighty to whom he prayed would at last give the country the blessing of repose. St. Aldegonde was not persuaded, but on 3 December sent the Prince

another appeal, eloquent, brimming with learned references to history, to the Peloponnesian War, to Cæsar, to the Goths and Vandals who had come down "comme un torrent impétueux," bringing "un chaos et confusion au monde," sweeping away "toutes sciences et tout humanité". Nothing, he cried, nothing was worth a long war. "There is no affliction nor burden, however heavy and however horrible, which so darkens and tramples under foot the glory of God and wipes out all knowledge of him, as does a war like this, full of outrages and enormities, mother and nurse of every kind of blasphemy and impiety." The passionate plea struck answering chords in William's heart; but it left his purpose unshaken, and again he replied firmly that his will was set upon seeing the struggle through, come what may, that there lay his duty. They asked St. Aldegonde at the Hague what he really thought Orange wanted. He told them—the declaration has been found at Simancas—that his friend had no personal ambition and would gladly leave the country if assured that the people could "live in the liberty of their consciences".

The war went on, and within a few months of Requesens' arrival both a great triumph and a great disaster befell the rebels' arms. The triumph was the capture of Middelburg. In December the Prince went to Flushing to superintend the operations in Walcheren, and almost at once the Grand Commander, perceiving the crucial importance of Middelburg, moved to Bergen op Zoom to organize a final attempt at relieving the town wherein Mondragon and his men were at the last gasp. By 20 January, William had put everything in order. He went off in his painted galley from Zierickzee and delivered an exhortation to the officers of Admiral Boisot's fleet, leaving forthwith for Delft to assist

besieged Leyden. Nine days later Requesens, standing on the Schakerloo dyke at Bergen, despatched seventy-five vessels under Julian Romero to meet the Dutchmen. Floods of rain poured down from a dark and fateful sky. Scarcely had anchor been weighed than Requesens, drenched on his sandhill, heard an immense roar and saw a vast fountain of flame—one of his ships had blown up with all her crew. The fleet, shaken by the omen, held on, and off Romerswaal sailed into the Dutch. Romero, a brave soldier but no seaman, could not manage his ships. Boisot's people flung out grappling-irons and boarded every ship they could reach. Axes, pikes, daggers were used; no quarter was given and the carnage was fearful. A sweeping rebel victory was won; 6000 Spaniards were killed (many of them gripped by their wild enemies and heaved overboard), almost the whole of the fleet was captured or sunk, forty-seven ensigns and 600 brass pieces were taken. The paltry remnant of the ships returned to Bergen, Romero leaping in the sea before harbour was reached and swimming up to the feet of Resquesens (who had kept his vigil on the dyke all day) to tell laconically his tale. Sancho d'Avila, who with another squadron was to have joined Romero, drew off, and Requesens and his vanquished captain returned to Brussels. Mondragon surrendered next month, William allowing him and his troops to retire with all their stores, stipulating only that Mondragon would come back if St. Aldegonde were not released and that Middelburg must take the oath to him as royal stadtholder and pay him a heavy indemnity. William and the insurgents now possessed the whole coast of Zeeland and Holland, and Walcheren which commanded the mouths of the Scheldt was entirely theirs. "I praise God for all," wrote the Prince to his young brother, "Leyden must be revictualled."

For the proposals of peace were only "toutes tromperies, abusions et fausetez pour nous prendre à la pipée".

With any luck the revictualling of Leyden ought soon to be accomplished. In the autumn the Nassaus had thought of descending upon Groningen. William had dissuaded them. "I thank you," said he, "for the solicitude and good vigilance with which you toil in the common cause"; but Groningen was a strong place, not so important as others, and not to be taken at a dash. The next plan—one to take Maestricht—he welcomed. The capture of Maestricht would be a great stroke and would draw off the Spaniards from Leyden. "I hold," he wrote, "that our only way is to make a speedy end of this war and expel these devils of Spaniards before the Duke of Alva has raised another army or the people here, sick of war, give in to the enemy who tempt them with pardons"; and he laboriously set down for them details of what they should do, how many men of each arm and each nation they should take, and advised them at worst, after having done their utmost before Maestricht, to "retake the road to Brabant and harass the enemy there, burning and doing as much damage as you can". Louis' preparations when 1574 opened were at last complete. With the money from France and more that John had collected in Germany the Counts had collected 9000 horse and foot, 2000 of the cavalry having served as escort to Henry of Anjou, whom Louis had interviewed on his way to Poland, and who, like Catherine and Alençon, had given him assurances of support.

The brothers Louis, John, and Henry (aged but 24), with their close friend Duke Christopher, son of the Elector Palatine, took the field in February with brave inscriptions on their banners, crossed the Rhine and

made for Maestricht. The arrangement was that they were to take the town and then march to join William, who with 6000 men had stationed himself in the Isle of Bommel. Combined, the armies would be sufficiently powerful to take up a dominating position between Haarlem and Leyden, regarding the fate of which William was increasingly anxious.

Maestricht was never to fall to Count Louis. He was not then or ever again to join the elder brother whom he so intensely loved and revered. The invaders arrived before the town to find the Meuse frozen, too hard to navigate, too unevenly to cross on foot. Whilst they hesitated, Sancho d'Avila and Mendoza hurried up with 16,000 mercenaries whom the Governor had hastily enlisted in Germany, and on 18 March Mendoza got across the river during the night and made an attack in which Louis lost several hundred men. The retreat, which should have commenced immediately it was known that so strong a Spanish army was near, was then commenced, Louis leading his troops down the river hoping thus to reach Holland. Day after day d'Avila pressed behind him, and at last, when the Count had reached Mookerheyde in the swamps where Waal and Meuse converge, he learnt that the royalist general had done a forced march along the left bank, crossed to the right bank and now lay ahead, between him and his western goal. He was in the trap. Escape was impossible. A furious conflict ensued in which the rebels were utterly overwhelmed by the heavy odds, nearly every man being slaughtered on the field or pushed down into the sucking marshes to suffocate. At the close of the day Louis with young Henry and Duke Christopher—John had fortunately been recalled to Cologne—rallied a few horse and plunged into the opposing ranks in a last impetuous charge of despair. They fell and died, no man could

say where ; their bodies were never found. With his brother and his friend, Louis of Nassau, the mirror of Christian chivalry, the undaunted and high of heart, had gone to an obscure death and a nameless grave.

CHAPTER XIV

LEYDEN AND REQUESENS

WILLIAM of Orange heard there had been a battle; but for a week he did not learn the worst, although he soon grew to suspect it. He sent messenger after messenger to his brothers, but no reply came. "I beg you," wrote he from Bommel on 18 April, "tell me how many of your men are wounded and if you have any prisoners of rank; for many rumours circulate here. Give my humble regards to Duke Christopher." Three days later he was alarmed:—

"MY BROTHERS, I am in the greatest anxiety; for I have not received any answer to the seven letters I have sent you since the tenth of this month (the last on the 18th). I send the present messenger as I hear that the French have approached Cologne, though no news has come from you. I do not know whether you got mine of the 18th; the bearer will tell you what was in it. I beseech you say where you are and what you purpose doing, for I am worrying greatly about you. Written at Bommel this 21st day of April, 1574.

"Your very good brother to do you service,
"WILLIAM OF ORANGE."

Next day he wrote John saying that he knew there had been a fight but was still in suspense; if the Counts were dead their troops must be used elsewhere. But at last, though certain information was still lacking, con-

viction was borne in upon him ; and on 7 May, bleeding at heart, but unbeaten, he emptied his soul to John,¹ who was at Dillenburg with the brave, loving old mother, of whose five gallant sons but two now remained to her.

“BROTHER,” ran William’s letter, “I am grieved to hear you can learn nothing of Duke Christopher and our brothers. If they be dead in truth people do great wrong in concealing their death, for all who speak to me think I am hiding the truth and that my dissimulation shows all to be lost and the last hope gone. Nothing, I confess, could have been a heavier blow to me. Yet we must always bow to the will of God, who shed the blood of his only son to preserve his Church, and will do nothing that will not redound to his and his Church’s glory ; though to the world that may seem a thing hard of belief. Though we all die and this poor folk be hounded and massacred we must stand fast in the knowledge that God will never forsake his own . . . As there is no people readier to rejoice at good news than this, so none is more speedily cast down by evil news ; so that they are now at their wits’ ends, holding everything to be finished and no means of succour left for them. It happens also that the new Governor has unfortunately published an ample pardon, forgiving all past things to every one, save 14 or 15 persons ; you will guess that, things going thus badly here, some rush to accept this pardon. For me, I shall do my duty as far as in me lies as I have always done, knowing that if this land is again brought under the Spanish yoke, religion in all other countries will suffer for it, and perhaps fall in danger of being obliterated so that not a spark of it will remain. The Germans

¹ The letter (which is very long, occupying a dozen pages in the printed “Correspondence”) is here greatly condensed. It never reached John, but fell into the hands of the Spaniards and was, years after William had died, returned to his son Maurice.

will then see the pity of it ; and the English too, who (prudently as they think) have always temporized and waited upon events and the development of our affairs ; and the French also, who have so willingly taken arms for religion, will be in sore trouble, for the Kings of France and Spain will make a new league to wipe out the religion at a blow . . . I tell you frankly," he goes on, with an access of semi-despair, "my head is so racked with the intolerable load of business and with brooding and sorrowing over the loss of Duke Christopher and Louis and Henry, that I hardly know what I am doing."

But he sternly puts weakness behind him and, plunging into new plans for resistance, proceeds in a wonderful revelation of courage :—

"It is hard to hold out alone. But remember what I have told you before. This country can hold out for two years against all the forces of Spain, but after that must have foreign help—though God could arrange it otherwise as he has done in the past ; but I speak humanly. As the two years have gone by it is essential that some Princes should hold out their hands to us. Yet, I say, if there is none that will so do and if we must fall for lack of assistance, in the name of God let it be ! We shall for all time have the honour of having done what no nation has ever done before us, namely, without the least aid defended ourselves in so small a country against the tremendous efforts of enemies so mighty. And as for the poor inhabitants of this country, deserted by all the world, they will, I trust, hold out in the future as they have done in the past ; and unless it be God's will to chastise and destroy us utterly it will still cost the Spaniards the half of Spain in money and men before they have made an end of us !"

Never losing sight for a moment of the practical, William at the end of this incomparable letter drifts

calmly on to a catalogue of his forces and dispositions, his strength in "artillerie, munitions, pionniers, fortifications," how many ships he has, how many companies French, English, Scotch, Walloon and Fleming. He was anticipating that the crushing defeat of Louis would be followed by an immediate invasion of Holland and a possible last stand. But luck for once was on his side, and the battle of Mook had very little effect on the fortunes of the war. Immediately after the combat mutiny broke out among the Spanish troops. They had received no pay for years; their wives and children whom they carried about with them were crying for food; and their uniforms were in rags. After their ordinary custom they regularized the mutiny, giving the army a constitution as though it were a little State and appointing an "Eletto" (a democratically chosen chief) to voice their demands. Money not arriving from Brussels, they crossed the Meuse, and, pillaging as they went, headed for Antwerp. Thither, at an urgent call from the Antwerp Governor, hastened Requesens; but he dared not resist the malcontents (as defeat or victory in a battle against his own soldiers would have been equally disastrous), and they entered the city. They were masters of the situation and knew it. While the Broad Council was debating Requesens' request of a loan to satisfy them, they lived like a horde of sultans. The rich warehouses of Antwerp must be emptied to clothe them in silks and velvets; the cellars of the civic worthies must disgorge for their banquets and debauches: the affair was almost a peaceful sack. The Council at the end of April gave in, and, with a worthless mortgage on the royal lands as security, voted 400,000 crowns. Delirious with inebriety and joy and laden with booty, the mutineers assembled for a great feast in the historic Place de Meir. Just as the revelry had reached its height, there

was a thunder of guns from the Scheldt. Admiral Boisot, ever vigilant and still in high spirits about his victory over Romero, had sailed in suddenly and was cannonading the Spanish fleet lying under Antwerp. In a hot brief encounter he destroyed fourteen ships of twenty-two, and then showed a clean pair of heels with the royal Admiral Haemstede his prisoner. Not only had Mook Heath been fruitless but it had been avenged. A wave of encouragement went over the insurgent Provinces, and Requesens, baffled and at a loss what to do next, again inclined towards negotiation as a cover for recuperation. The Prince received an emissary from him, but for a while the matter went no further.

The Grand Commander proceeded thereupon to the reinvestment of Leyden, the first siege of which had been summarily raised when Louis of Nassau appeared before Maestricht. This Leyden, destined by its superhuman valour and sufferings to make its name one of the shining names of the earth, lay on the northern branch of the debouching Rhine amid a mesh of waterways, the currents of which meandered slowly through a ripe land rescued from the ravening sea. It was quiet, prosperous; its stone houses and churches and public buildings stoutly and pleasantly built; its streets and canals lined with ancient and shady trees; and the centre of it was dominated by a solitary tree-sprinkled mound capped by a decaying watch-tower. In such a place, did trouble not come from without, life might run easily and smoothly for centuries. But now anxiety was in every mind in Leyden, and a fire had been kindled in every breast, and the pavements rang day and night beneath the tread of hurrying citizens preparing for the onset of the ocean of men sweeping over the fields towards their walls. All too foolishly they had neglected

William's warning to set their defences in order immediately the first siege had closed.

Valdez, having garrisoned the Hague, reached Leyden on 21 May and rapidly invested it with three score redoubts. He had with him 8000 men; within the city were, of trained and partly trained men, but five companies of the civic guard and a small body of mercenary irregulars, under the command of the public-spirited Lord of Nordwyck. The odds were so great that William had grave doubts of the power of resistance. "We are," he tells John, "sore beset, for they have unfortunately besieged Leyden on a sudden while it was still without garrison." "Nevertheless," he continues, "the citizens are of very good heart and inform me that they mean sturdily to defend themselves." He replied to their message with an earnest entreaty that they should do their utmost; were it only for three months he might succeed in delivering them. The Leydeners, doggedly cheerful, replied that as far as they were concerned all should go well.

Philip's general amnesty (which William had mentioned in his letter to John of Nassau) was formally published by Requesens on 6 June. There was reason to fear that it would prove a strong temptation, but the people were as firm as mountains. Holland had been fighting all these years and had at last forced the enemy half-way to his knees; she would not now out of mere fatigue and faint-heartedness yield all she had ever fought for. The Leyden folk typified the spirit that animated the whole Province. Valdez, backed by the impassioned pleas of some renegades from the town, proffered them the royal pardon. They scorned it, affected to suspect it, and characteristically rejected it in a hexameter: "Fistula dulce canit, volucrem dum decipit auceps"—"Sweet is the sound of the pipe as the bird

falls a prey to the fowler". Following William's advice they catalogued all the food in Leyden and put every individual upon rations. For a week or two they indulged in small sorties, a reward being given for each swarthy head brought into the town. This was risky, and a stop was put to it; Leyden, apprised by carrier pigeons of what was being done by friends beyond the encompassing host, could do nothing but wait and watch.

William meanwhile was at Delft and Rotterdam, vigorously working at his double task of planning the relief of Leyden and pushing on the negotiations with the Viceroy. The key to his position was the strong fortress of Polderwaert standing where the Meuse and the Yessel joined. If this were lost all prospect of raising the siege would go with it, and, realizing this, the Spaniards on 29 June attempted to storm it. They failed. Next day Requesens' representative, Hugo Bonte, came to Rotterdam to treat with William. The Prince saw him, but anxious as he was for Leyden's safety gave way not an inch. He was quite willing to discuss; never in his life did he fail to listen to proposals of peace or to grasp at the meagrest chance of peace. Would he send delegates to confer with the Grand Commander's spokesmen at Liège? asked Bonte. William, mindful that Aldegonde had not been released in spite of pledges, suggested that Gertruydenburg in Utrecht would be a more convenient meeting-place, explaining also that all negotiations must start on the postulate that the King would accord religious toleration. He himself would gladly agree to leave the Netherlands for ever, once peace on that basis was assured for the people he was leading; failing that, he and they would trust in Providence and go on with the struggle. Bonte had no authority to grant the only terms which Orange would entertain and he withdrew. In July St. Aldegonde, on

parole, came from his prison at the Hague with messages similar to Bonte's. William had the pain of listening to his old friend and companion, now utterly disheartened, repeating the counsels of despair which he had used in his letter in the winter and which had been repelled with such firmness. They would never win now, Marnix said to him; let them get the best they could from the enemy. Perhaps the King would be merciful. Let the Estates of Holland and Zeeland humbly petition for a settlement. This was the same St. Aldegonde who had, with his fiery golden tongue, stirred those very Estates to a fervour of generous patriotism but two years before. William must have pitied him and have felt his own sense of utter solitude deepen as the craven words fell. This was almost the last of his old knightly fellows. The Netherlands he had known in former days were gone. Egmont and Horn, early at his side, had been executed. Hoogstraten had perished in the field. Brederode had died a degenerate exile. De la Marck he himself had had to degrade and send away. His three brothers, first Adolf, then Louis and Henry, had fallen as they had fought. His French friends had passed in agony into the shadow. His young son was a prisoner, though not yet a pervert in Spain. Even of his enemies the chief had gone from the Low Countries and had been replaced by new men. Here was Philip Marnix, sole remnant almost of the past, no longer his true self, pleading expediency and destitute of trust in the ultimate triumph of the right. Sorrowfully but without shrinking William emphasized and re-emphasized his irreducible minimum of demands—the foreigners to go, the constitutions to be restored, above all the liberty of conscience and worship to be unshakeably established.

St. Aldegonde returned gloomily to his jail; William to his military schemes. Possibility of breaking forcibly

through the Spaniard's rampart of steel there was none. As at Alkmaar so at Leyden the insurgents' one hope was the ocean. Leyden was but fifteen miles from it; the country between city and sea was below sea-level; only the dykes kept out the rolling flood and Boisot's fleet, and the dykes along Yessel and Meuse were commanded by William's forts. It would be a slow business and it was doubtful whether the Leydeners with all their fortitude could keep Valdez out long enough; but it was the only way, and the Prince soon convinced his Hollanders that even at the cost of a year's harvest and untold property it must be taken. A guarantee fund was subscribed for the future reclamation of the drowned land, the Estates voting plentiful sums and citizens and their wives in many towns pledging their most cherished possessions for the sake of the cause; and in the first week of August the dykes were pierced and the great sluices at Rotterdam and Delftshaven opened, the Prince in person supervising the work. As the water poured slowly, painfully slowly, in, the Dutch cities at William's orders set actively about collecting provisions and vessels in readiness for the time when Boisot would be able to sail in.

The plight of the defenders of Leyden was becoming daily worse. Renewed offers of pardon by Valdez were flung back with a sneer; but the stock of food was running out, and a scant supply of malt cake was the only wholesome thing remaining. Gloom fell on them like a pall. "We have lived two months with bread and a month with nothing," they declared to William. Had their countrymen forgotten them? they asked; and their traitorous brethren in the royalist camp laughed and jeered at them for having leant upon a broken reed. At last on 21 August a pigeon flew in. It was caught and its message detached. The Prince had sent it, say-

ing that the dykes had been broken and that Boisot was coming. This cheering news was read in the market-place by the Burgomaster and, to the amazement of Valdez' army, the sound of mirth and joyous music rose out of Leyden.

Had the defenders but known, the letter that lifted their sinking spirits was written by a man dangerously ill. Beneath the external vivacity with which William had kept his burghers in good courage a profound melancholy had fastened and spread like a cancer. No help was coming from Germany in spite of his renewed appeals to John ; he had no friend with him, and he was agonized by the forced inactivity which was imposed on him as he stood and watched this dreadful, intolerably lagging race between starvation within Leyden's walls and the inch-by-inch advancing sea without. His prolonged labours in the damp had been more than his toil-worn frame could stand ; and the combination of mental and physical causes prostrated him into a raging fever. He lay at Rotterdam attended by a few devoted servants, including his secretary, Brunynck, who sent almost daily bulletins to the distressed family at Dillenburg. When he grew delirious the physicians bled him. They drew blood so copiously that he nearly died from sheer weakness and exhaustion. " He cannot stir without great pain," wrote his *maître d'hôtel*, de Nuynhem, and Secretary Brunynck on the 22nd. " He has no taste for his food though by God's favour he took to-day some egg and a little blanc-mange and some comfits, which may sustain nature but will not much fortify the body. Of true sleep he gets little, doing nothing but doze continually. Three doctors here cannot diagnose the disease but all agree that it is brought on by melancholy." Yet always day after day his mind was racked by Leyden. A rumour came asserting that it

had fallen, and he went through tortures ; another, after an interval, that its walls were still unbreached and the waters steadily rising, and he began to recover, thanking Heaven for its mercies. "His Excellency," reports Brunynck to John, "begins to feel better. The fever did not attack him all yesterday, and having rested so well last night his excellency is better to-day ; so that we hope he will soon be out of danger . . . The estates and others in authority are doing their best whilst he is ill to carry on affairs. Of the advent of the new army and fleet from Spain we have no certitude."

August ended and September began. In Leyden the joy at William's message soon faded away again. Every hour men went up to the old round tower which stood sentinel over the city, and scanned the horizon with troubled eyes, watching for a sight of the sea with more eagerness than ever did the Ten Thousand who marched to meet it. There was dyke after dyke between them and the outermost line that the Prince had broached ; would ocean or fleet ever cross them all ? The malt cake ran out as the bread had done. The last of the cows and horses were eaten ; lean cats and dogs fetched gold ; and the poorer, almost too feeble to stand, grovelled about in dark corners of their houses for rats and such vermin, raked the rubbish-heaps for filthy fragments and greedily tore the leaves from the trees. "The pregnant women," says the Catholic Renon de France, "could not give birth for very weakness, the sentinels could not keep watch, and the legs of men walking in the streets gave way beneath them." Plague, the twin-sister of famine, broke out and hundreds died of it, sometimes by whole families at a time. It seemed as though Valdez' soldiers when they entered would come into a town of fifty thousand corpses, and many of the famishing folk began savagely murmuring that too

much had been done and that they had better surrender while the majority were yet alive. But the brave Burgomaster, Adrian van der Werff, was proof against all their reproaches and threats. He would never give in, he said, though they killed him for it. Skinny men plucked angrily at his sleeve; gaunt-breasted women held their bony children up before his eyes. He tore open his cloak and showed them his flesh. If they would they could eat that. His dauntlessness quelled their murmurs and they fell back to nurse their despair. So September dragged on.

William rose from his bed, still weak, early in the month, and perfected the preparations for relief. The water was now lapping the slopes of the Landscheiding, a huge dyke which stretched along five miles from Leyden, and Boisot, who had brought a body of desperate and ferocious seamen from the isles of Zeeland, loaded his 200 heavy barges with cannon and food, embarked, and swept in over the submerged land. On the night of the 11th they touched the Landscheiding, and, after a fierce fight, drove the Spanish outpost off it. A wide breach was made and the fleet sailed through; but then there was for Boisot (whom William had joined for a few days) and for the Leydeners a period of sickening suspense. Sometimes the water rose a little, sometimes, driven back by contrary winds, perceptibly fell. Nightly the haggard Leydeners heard the boom of guns and saw the flashes of their brothers' fire only five miles, four miles, three miles away. But yet the Spanish army lay there encamped and Valdez's sixty forts were still uncaptured and the besieged as the burdensome time crawled on again relapsed into sullen despair. Hope glimmered once more on the 28th when stout Boisot, whose men had been storming the nearer dykes with a brutal heroism which the Spaniards, terrified by the watery portent, had

been unable to withstand, sent in a dove to herald his immediate approach. The bells were pealed for joy and the half-dead struggled up from their couches and cheered in the streets. And then again they were stricken down ; the wind veered dead east and the shallow waters were unnavigable. Seventy hours of wretched, dazed staring at the vanes ; and with 1 October came the wild equinoctial gale from the west. The sea was pushed up in great masses and Boisot floated inwards steadily. Next night in the darkness there was a long savage exchange of shots between the Zeelanders and the besieging army. It ceased. The night wore on. Dawn came grey over the waves that surged around the walls of the silent city. Not a sound rose from the Spanish redoubts, and the patriot crews wondered uneasily what was the matter ; but presently Boisot saw a boy come scrambling along from the city, waving his hat to them. The Spaniards had gone, beaten (as the note left by Valdez in his empty room said) not by the rebels but by the deluge. The remorseless risings of that strange sea, the roar of those leaping waves in the gloom, mingled with the roar of Boisot's cannon, had been too much for their shaken nerves ; and the whole 10,000 had stolen away unseen and shivering under cover of the protecting darkness. It is alleged, but not confirmed, that just before they fled a gigantic piece of the town's shielding wall had fallen with a thunderous crash, leaving, unknown to them, a gap wherethrough they might have rushed into the city and massacred its inhabitants every one.

Boisot's Zeelanders headed up the canals and with great sweeps rowed their lumbering barges right up to the heart of the town, whilst from every by-way there swarmed emaciated beings, sobbing and quavering with the reaction of joy. Food rained on to the tow-paths,

the people flinging themselves on it like ravenous dogs. The pangs stifled, men, women, and children, tears streaming down their faces, followed the sturdy Admiral and his bronzed seamen to the principal church, where great hymns shook up to God for the mighty wonder He had wrought.

This was Sunday and when, in the early afternoon, a messenger with the glorious news reached Delft, whither William had returned, the Prince was in church and the minister preaching. The sermon ended, William, his worn face radiant, passed the note to the pulpit whence it was read to the congregation. Fervid exaltation marked the remainder of the service. Next day, unheeding the warnings of those around him, that a man with the dregs of fever still in him ought not to expose himself to the pestilent air of a corpse-strewn town, William repaired to Leyden whence the waters, the providential wind having again swung round, were already retreating. Praising the citizens for a resistance never excelled in the annals of war, he gave them a liberal reward. With the consent of the Estates he granted the city the right of holding a yearly ten days' fair free of tolls, and founded and endowed a University which very rapidly won a unique reputation for research in the less explored fields of knowledge. In its charter of endowment, "a masterpiece of ponderous irony" as Motley calls it, the now almost ludicrous fiction of allegiance to Philip was preserved, the charter nominally being granted by Philip "after consultation with our beloved cousin William Prince of Orange". Before the winter was over, with pageant and allegorical play and general holiday the new academy was formally inaugurated.

The relief of Leyden marked another stage in the combat, and Requesens' letters to Philip grew increas-

ingly dismal. The Grand Commander was utterly at a loss what to do, with Haarlem and Amsterdam alone of important northern towns remaining in his hands. A suspension of hostilities, a renewal of negotiations followed; and William the Silent took advantage of the breathing space to regularize his position with the Estates. For the cities of the two Provinces, especially those of Zeeland, were jealous of his power. The Estates had of late shown a growing inclination not merely to be stingy with supplies, but to interfere with the conduct of war—no matter for debating assemblies—on account of the supplies they did grant. Now the Prince had a space in which he could put before them once and for all the news which his experiences had crystallized. At a meeting on 20 October—a fortnight after Leyden's relief—he made a blunt though dispassionate speech to them: either they must define and enlarge his powers, give him statutorily the dictatorship they had vaguely thrust on him previously and had been eating away ever since, or they must resign themselves to bidding him farewell. The alternative was drastic. Whether he would really have gone at once is impossible to say; but his resolve was not put to the test. His bold stroke had immediate effect, and early in November the Estates of Holland (there was a larger arrangement next year which included Zeeland) agreed to give him an autocratic military and civil Stadtholderate tempered only by provisions that he should consult them about the taxes and other matters. He had another wrestle with them over a fixed money allowance for public purposes. He asked for 45,000 florins per month; they offered on 25 November 30,000 florins. Back went their messenger with another ultimatum—he had learnt how to deal with them—and the Estates, knowing that without the leader the cause were irretrievably lost, again meekly

gave in. Finally, in order to secure a predominant voice in the Estates, he morally forced them to consent to an arrangement whereby their will was to be expressed in five votes. The large cities, mercantile, domineering, suspicious of him, were to have one vote, the nobles one; and the other three were to go to the small cities which were devoted to him, to the Prince himself, and to his pocket boroughs of Buren and Bommel. The nucleus of the future Dutch Commonwealth had been put upon a new constitutional basis and William, in future communications with friends and foes abroad, would have a recognized footing. He had gained his end by crude methods; but that was no time for Republican theorizings, and he had learnt in the bitterest school that the unity and swiftness of action required for the conduct of this war could only proceed from one-man rule. And as far as that goes it cannot be too strongly emphasized that he was never an equalitarian, that his end was not that of a Socialist demagogue turned despot. Whatever may be true of later days, it certainly was not obvious in that century that it was every educated person's duty to be a democratic revolutionary. William constitutionally and by conviction was a Whig. Taking all power into his own hands was distasteful to him, just as renouncing his Sovereign was distasteful to him—but at a crisis one was as possible to him as the other. And in this light is to be read his earlier long aversion from taking arms. To his mind class-layers as in a pyramid must be an integral part of the framework of any society which was to be stable. Authority must not lightly or on small provocation be challenged, as the rabble might learn by example, and political earthquake bring chaos, and savagery ensue.

A promising plan of William's for seizing Antwerp

failed through the timorousness of his accomplices within the place, "who dared not at the fixed time take up arms though our men and boats were on the spot ready to help them". Then there was a long lull during which delegates (including St. Aldegonde at last free and in better spirits) on William's side and the Louvain doctor, Leoninus, on the Governor's, met repeatedly to discuss a possible settlement. Each side was temporarily exhausted, so each side sought peace. But, since each side sought peace on its own terms, the negotiations were foredoomed to failure; and it is only fair to both William and Requesens to say that neither of them dallied with any delusions upon the subject. The Grand Commander lent a respectful ear to the offers of arbitration which came from the amiable Maximilian. He sent to Breda learned doctors to offer the States impossible terms upon impossible conditions. The States were asked to accept the old autocracy and the old inquisition, and to surrender several of their most important strategical towns—Brill, Enkhuizen, Flushing—as pledges of their good faith. The conferences extended from the early autumn of 1574 to July in the following year; for nine solid months the negotiators for each party used words to conceal their thoughts with a diffuseness rare even in diplomacy. It were fruitless here to analyse the progress of these *pourparlers*. For, all that while, Brussels and Madrid were conferring as to ways and means of raising more money for more troops, Holland and Zeeland were begging William to suppress Catholicism and investing him with powers greater even than those he had previously possessed, and Orange himself, in his private letters, was expressing undisguisedly his opinion that the speedy renewal of hostilities was inevitable. . . .

CHAPTER XV

CHARLOTTE OF BOURBON

HERE, in this comparative calm between two storms, William's mind was occupied with a crisis in his domestic affairs. A man with a strong craving for affection and companionship, the loneliness of his private life had weighed upon him even in the midst of the excitement of military campaigns. Save St. Aldegonde scarcely an old friend remained, and he rarely saw his children. Now that the fighting had been suspended, this loneliness was doubly irksome. For years the wife who might have been an incalculable consolation to him had been a spring of bitter grief. One has not forgotten that even in the early days of the marriage Anne of Saxony's extravagant worship of her husband had soon given way to a ferocious hate. Long before the open feud with Spain had arisen, whilst William was still the most brilliant figure in the splendid pageantry of the Brussels Court, his wife's perverted nature had begun to make itself abundantly manifest. Her behaviour in the palace had danced on the borderland between eccentricity and lunacy. She had wrangled in public like a Flemish fishwife. She had sneered at her husband in his presence, and abused him behind his back; and the patience with which the Prince had tolerated her insolence had served but to give her the added stimulus of impunity. Nevertheless, at that time she must have still shown occasional gleams of better things, or a man so sensible as William could never have

continued to hope, as he did, for her ultimate reformation.

His hopes, as previous narration has told, proved worse than visionary. Stirred by feelings which were beyond her narrow comprehension, he flung away home, wealth and ease for a cause, only to find that he had also severed the last bonds which bound his wife to him. She left him and set up a separate establishment. Whilst the solitary man was at bay in a corner of sands and shallows, championing the rights of conscience and freedom against the tyrant who dominated a hemisphere, she was intriguing with his enemies and writing querulous letters to the unmentionable Alva. And savage as her behaviour had been in the green tree, it was infinitely worse in the dry. Her temper, in the words of the historian of the Netherlands, "became violent to ferocity. She beat her servants with her hands and with clubs; she threatened the lives of herself, her attendants, of Count John of Nassau, with knives and daggers, and indulged in habitual profanity and blasphemy, uttering frightful curses upon all around." She ran through the whole gamut of vice, from drunkenness to adultery, until the vulgar knew her as "*la ribaude de Babylon*". William's relatives in Germany found it impossible to keep her in check; her own uncle at last took her away in a common country cart, resisting to the last, and caged her like a beast. It is scarcely to be marvelled at that William came to consider himself freed from all responsibility towards this fiend, that he began to cast about for an escape from the "state of widowhood" in which his heart had been stifled for so long, that he should have begun to think of another woman. And, under the circumstances, it was not very extraordinary that that other woman should have been Charlotte of Bourbon.

His direct personal intercourse with Charlotte had been of the slightest. He had had one or two glimpses of her—they could have been little more—at the Elector's quiet Court in ancient Heidelberg. He had seen her, he had heard her speak ; that was all. The most of her that his memory could have cherished was the recollection of a few casual words and the image of a face of rare intelligence and reticent charm. But through other channels than those of immediate observation, he knew enough of her to be able to fill in the scanty outline of her character that, unaided, he could have drawn. Her history was an open book to Europe ; and every line of it must have set tingling the sympathies of a man like Orange. Indeed, in many respects, that history bore more than a superficial resemblance to his own. Like him, she was a rebel against authority and an exile by choice. Like him, she had clung firmly to the reformed religion when a suppressed conscience was the gateway to peace. Like him she had left country and friends behind rather than allow herself to be subdued by influences against which her higher instincts revolted. And when the powers that she had offended remained unrelenting, she faced the bleak sky with much the same equanimity and resoluteness of spirit that William had shown in his wider sphere.

Born in 1547, the daughter of that quintessence of Catholic orthodoxy and most fiendish of persecutors, the Duke of Montpensier, she had had an upbringing somewhat strange. Her mother, whilst concealing all knowledge of the fact from the Duke, had reared the child in the Calvinist creed. That the seeds thus planted lived to bear fruit is eloquent witness both of the parent's devotion, and of the pupil's precocity. For, whilst Charlotte was still immature in years, Montpensier, scenting probably some wind of the heresy on his hearth, over-

bore the desires of his wife, who wished to marry the girl to the Duke of Longueville (a friend and pupil of Calvin), and illegally forced her to take the vows and enter a convent. The child had to be dragged to the altar where a stony priest made her "*balbutier quelques paroles*". There she remained and there, novice and nun and abbess, she grew into womanhood. But her early beliefs only gathered strength with time. More and more she chafed at the exclusion which fettered her, and shrank from the rituals and images that her Protestant soul despised as meaningless or idolatrous. At last, in 1572, unable any longer to bear that restricted and hypocritical life, she formed a resolution which, in a woman of her rank, profession, and century, was nothing short of heroic, stole from Jouarrs with two other nuns (and some conventual moneys to help her on her way), fled across the border and the Rhine, and sought shelter with the Palatine Elector. Several attempts were made to reconcile her father to her, but Montpensier, whose first wife had died years before and who had now shocked Charlotte by marrying a young Guise, curtly refused to see her, to write to her, or even to read her letters, until she had recanted. And, since her religious convictions were not so easily adjustable as those of some of her royal French relations, she had perforce to remain in Germany, where she endeared herself greatly to the Elector and his wife, and maintained close relations with the Huguenot preachers who, like herself, were taking refuge in the Palatinate. It is surely not too much to suppose that this woman, with this career, took on her side no ordinary interest in the indomitable man who was fighting Spain single-handed, even before, in the Castle of Heidelberg, she first looked upon his brown eyes and careworn, kindly face. Almost from her infancy the name and deeds of William of Orange had

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WILLIAM THE SILENT

FROM A PORTRAIT BY MIERVELT IN THE REYKS MUSEUM

rung through France. Strange if the Abbess of Jouarrs, in her silent night-chamber, secretly worshipping her God after her own fashion, had not often offered up her tears and her prayers for the man who was heading a forlorn hope of Protestantism in the North. For she was devout, and a prisoner.

Many such speculations must have occupied William's mind, and they could only have one result. But however strongly he may have been convinced that marriage, marriage with Charlotte, would conduce to his private happiness, the issue was by no means entirely limited to such considerations as those. During that long winter of fruitless negotiation he had more to do than to feed his heart with dreams of a sweet and abiding presence coming to brighten the dull rooms of his house at Delft. He had instigated a little folk of fishermen and traders to stake their lives, their families, and their homes upon the chances of a war against enormous odds. It would ill become him to do anything which might make those odds even greater than they were. Anne of Saxony's infidelity constituted ample ground for divorce; Count John had in his possession evidence enough to justify twenty divorces; but although the sordid truth about her had been publicly rumoured and privately reported, the documentary proofs had never been given to the world. Anne's relatives might forgive William for wishing to abstain from all further intercourse with her, to be freed from all save the nominal chain, but he knew too well that the coarse, brutal Saxon Elector and that caustic old bookworm, the Landgrave of Hesse, would be simply infuriated at the suggestion of another marriage. The support that the German Protestant Princes had given the struggling States had never been more than a "moral" support, but the Netherlanders were not so well supplied with friends

that they could afford to alienate even the lukewarm. At first glance, too, Charlotte of Bourbon seemed, from a political point of view, to be the last woman on earth towards whom he should have allowed his desire to stray, for a marriage with her would almost certainly give offence to Henry of France, and, with Spain hostile, Austria impotent, and England's Royal Virgin blowing deliberately hot and cold, France was the only one of the great Powers from whom he had any hopes of help in the field. A leader with his honesty, but with an insight less keen than his, might well have decided that the statesman's duty was incompatible with the man's inclinations, and have straightway shut all thought of wedlock from his heart.

William's analysis of political likelihoods was perfect ; but he could also analyse himself. For some reason or other it has pleased the commentators to make light of the defence of his action which he afterwards sent to his brother. They say that the affair was purely an affair of the heart ; that much may be admitted, but they also imply that William—on this one occasion—had no thought at all for the interest of the States. That is a shallow view, and one which there is no adequate reason for adopting. The crucial part of the Prince's letter to John was that in which he claims to be taking God's remedy against incontinence, and pleads that as long as he remained in his "*estat de veufvage*" there is always a risk of his buried passions bursting forth in an illicit direction, and thus bring a terrible "*schandale et bransle*" upon the Netherlands. It is possible to agree that these words need not be taken literally. A chastity of seven years' standing may be assumed invulnerable—granted no general deterioration in the man. We may agree with those who have denied that William was ignorant of his own moral strength ; indeed, the Prince admits

as much a little later. But he was addressing John of Nassau, who, although as honest as the day, was scarcely subtle. William giving John truth had to give him truth clad in a leathern jerkin. The real essence of his argument, as put to John, was that the welfare of the States was indissolubly bound up in his own welfare—physical or other. A hero may be human. He may be iron to a tyrant, and yet very human in his needs. And it is more consonant with what we know of William to suppose that he realized that continued loneliness would wear him out body and soul, and thus bring disaster upon his people worse than any which could result from the marriage, than that he should have done a thing utterly discordant with the whole course of his life before and after, by allowing his amorous ardours to lead him into a depth of selfishness.

Let France and Germany gnash teeth as they might, William's mind was made up. Correspondence passed, satisfactory correspondence. The Elector Palatine, not enthusiastically in favour of the match, concealed his thoughts; his wife and Charlotte were overjoyed. Early in 1575, St. Aldegonde, an ideal escort, was sent to Heidelberg with instructions to see the formalities through, and, if Charlotte did not change her mind, to bring her back with him, and with all convenient speed. Arrived on Bavarian soil, he found that affairs had marched. Henry of France had definitely refused to give his consent to the union, but had permitted it to be understood that he would put no obstacles in its way "since Mademoiselle is lucky to make such a good match". The Medicean dowager had written to a similar effect. Charlotte herself made no attempt to conceal her happiness. Now and then she showed a slight anxiety—as well she might—with regard to the legality of the divorce from Anne of Saxony. But such thoughts troubled her very

little upon the whole. Quite boldly, in the presence of the Count Palatine, she announced that there was no slightest need to seek the consent of the Duke of Montpensier. She was of age, she observed, and had a right, for present purposes, to adopt a temporary and more tractable parent in the form of the Elector. The divorce having once been proved, too, she was content to let William make what arrangements he liked with regard to Anne of Saxony, and she asked not a farthing in dowry; Orange could give her what he was able and willing to give. "She asks for nothing," wrote the Licentiate Zuleger (31 March), "but to await and bear with your Excellency whatever it may please God to send to your Excellency and her, being man and wife."

To William this news was very welcome. No sooner had he received it than he dispatched Hohenloo to Bavaria with final instructions as to the marriage. The memoir which he drew up on 24 April for Hohenloo's benefit is characteristic of its author. The fire of his eagerness had not consumed his common-sense. "It is my intention," he writes, "to see this matter through without deceiving her or leaving any ground for future reproaches or disputes." Hohenloo is to tell Charlotte and her guardians "how matters stand as towards the wife I have had . . . that almost all my goods have been set apart for my first children, so that I can give her no dowry". But he is to offer her the poor gift of a house that the Prince had bought at Middelburg, and another that he is building at Gertruydenburg. More will be done if possible, but "we are at war and know not what the end will be; and I am much in debt for this cause". And then, in an isolated paragraph, comes with simple pathos the acknowledgment of the fourteen years between them; "tell her that I begin to grow old, being about 42 years". He could not forget

his age now, as he looked even older than he was. Hardship and anxiety had greatly changed him. His temples, always high, had encroached on his hair and now, save for a tuft in the centre above his forehead, he was very bald. His face seemed to have grown squarer, and though his eyes retained their old beauty he was deeply furrowed and wrinkled and his beard was grizzling.

Hohenloo's message was unnecessary, for St. Aldegonde had arrived at Heidelberg to find himself preaching to the converted. The one thing necessary was the proof of Anne's infidelity, and for this he wrote to John of Nassau, meanwhile preparing for the journey back to Holland with Charlotte. On 21 May William himself wrote to John for the documents, with which the Count appeared unwilling to part. Orange explained to his brother that St. Aldegonde had gone to Bavaria with express directions to bring the Princess back immediately, so he besought him to send the papers relating to the adultery of "the wife I have had". Otherwise, said he, the whole terrible affair would have to be made public "to the great scandal of all the house of Saxony". Poor John was half distraught. He was writing letters to St. Aldegonde begging him to delay, waxing proverbial at William's expense: "Præcipitis consilii poenitentia comes et qui amat periculum peribit in eo". William was obstinately staking everything; yet, added John sadly, it was of no avail. Though his brother was rousing bitter animosity in Germany there was little hope of restraining him. He answered William with a passionate appeal for withdrawal before it was too late; mistaken as it was, it was full of the most fervent desire for William's welfare. But "*toute la maison de Saxe*" for whose feelings William had shown himself so hyperconsiderate, was far from imitating this consideration.

"*Toute la maison de Saxe*" was denouncing the Prince in the sturdiest German, and, in the Landgrave's case, sturdy Latin as well. For Anne they had no sympathy at all. Within a few months from this, the uncle took her, shut her up in a dungeon, and, for the last two miserable years of her life, subjected her (now completely mad) to a regimen of starvation and sermons. But their own dignity was wounded. The shame of a Saxon Princess was being exposed to the light of the sun, and they vomited forth volumes of protest against the indignity. The blunt language of the Elector is unfit for repetition; the Landgrave's is so curious as to render repetition inevitable. Writing to John, William of Hesse confined himself in the main to an onslaught on the marriage with the "Bourbonische Frewlein". But when he began to impart his feelings to the congenial heart of the Saxon Elector, he cast the most terrible reflections upon the lady herself. The woman whom De Thou mentions as "*præstanti forma et ingenio virgo*" the Landgrave blankly accused of being ugly. By sundry references to the undoubted fact that she was "a Frenchwoman and a nun," he almost as openly insinuated that her features were not the only things about her that would not bear close investigation.¹ That his suggestions were utterly baseless goes without saying; they were so baseless that the most fervent of Charlotte's admirers can be unresentfully amused at them. The Landgrave's temper, indeed, may be seen in the vindictive thoroughness with which he draws up his indictment. He classifies, and, to his own satisfaction, stultifies every conceivable reason for which the Prince

¹ The Spanish fling a more specific kind of dirt; "Plus tard," says Juste, referring to the memorialist Martin Antoine del Rio, "les Espagnols insinuèrent qu'elle avait été profanée par le baron de Renty, par le palatin Jean Casimir et même auparavant par Louis de Nassau".

might be marrying ; doing it with a pedantry which is as divorced from sane judgment as is his absurdly violent prejudice. But, ridiculous as all this was, it augured ill for the States, especially when there was talk as well of cutting off all connexion with the Calvinists, and of putting William on his defence at the forthcoming Diet of the Empire.

From France, too, came evil news. Neither Henry nor the cunning Catherine had done anything to prevent the marriage, but they were indignant at it none the less ; and Montpensier was so enraged that it was several years before he would resume communication with his daughter. Even then he had first to obtain an ecclesiastical declaration that Charlotte's vows had been void under both canon and civil law. But William, once his judgment had been formed, had no thought of turning back on it. Whilst St. Aldegonde and the bride were coming across to Brill, Orange busied himself with the last preparations for the wedding. The banns were read in church on three consecutive Sundays ; those who were murmuring of an illegal divorce were given every opportunity of coming forward and declaring their objections. None appeared. Determined to leave nothing undone which might safeguard Charlotte's position and his own, William proceeded to get a formal written opinion on the divorce from representatives of the clergy—who, of course, might be supposed to be the best informed people upon such a subject. He consulted Professor Feugheren of Leyden and Capet (or Capel), a learned Protestant priest. Feugheren's pronouncement was embodied in a long and flatulent discourse on the text, "every husband is a husband, and every generous heart must find heavy and intolerable the crime of adultery in its mate". Both he and his fellow were emphatically agreed that the divorce was legal, and the final assurance was sealed

when, on 11 June, their decision was confirmed by "five ministers of the Holy Gospel".

On that very day, 11 June, St. Aldegonde and his charge arrived at Brill. There the Prince met them, amidst the rejoicings and applause of the whole population, who lit great bonfires and, with a blowing of trumpets and beating of drums, followed the burgomasters to the shore whilst cannon roared a salute. With great ceremony the company proceeded to Dort, and in the church there, on the next day, the marriage was celebrated with universal symptoms of joy. It was followed by every kind of festivity and entertainment, including, no doubt, those allegorical plays upon which Motley so consistently exercises his lamblike cynicism. "Only," says the chronicler, "it was 'Zonder danssen'." Perhaps these good Calvinists thought the occasion too solemn. Charlotte's love and happiness were evident in the daughterly letter she wrote, begging for a little share in the affections of William's mother. Ere long John of Nassau himself was writing unqualified eulogies of her; and it were not easy to say what for eight long years she was to her husband. From the first he never concealed a thought from her; he sought her advice at every step, trivial or great. When, at the last, worn out by continual watching at his bedside, she sank into a premature grave, the blow nearly killed him. . . .

The marriage was accomplished. On 7 July, just as the tumult of war was again breaking forth, William wrote from Dort an exhaustive defence of the step he had taken. "I have perceived," he said to John, "by your letter (at which I was sore grieved) that you are in marvellous distress about this my marriage." He defends the apparent indiscretion and haste of it by pointing out—with obvious justice—that the longer he waited, the more cause for offence the Saxon family

would have had. "And I can assure you, brother," he continues, "that my intention ever since God gave me a little understanding, has always tended to this; to take no heed of words or of threats in a matter where I can act with a clear conscience . . . and this my marriage is a thing that I can do in good conscience before God, and without just reproach before men." That every one has tried to dissuade him from the marriage he claims to be in itself a proof of his sincerity; he would not have neglected the advice of a cloud of counsellors without long consideration and weighty reason. That the cause will suffer he denies. And finally, he strikes that intimate personal note to which reference had already been made.

Coming to the end of the letter one sees that the brief interval of uncertain quiet is over. The peace negotiations at Breda are dragging sadly, and the Prince has little hope that good will come of them. "Out yonder the enemy, after having wasted his time at Watterland, where he had put forth all his strength, has turned aside, and, finding the island of Clundert without fort or trench capable of withstanding so great a multitude, has found out from a spy a spot where the water might be crossed knee-deep, and has seized the island." They are fortifying Clundert, and have also "taken the town, and, after, the Castle of Buren, by the surrender of the captain, who made little resistance, having expected no assault or battery". The gloomy tone of all this was more than justified. Within a few days the Breda Conference broke down suddenly, and communications with Requesens ceased. Within a few weeks Schoonhoven had fallen, Oudewater had fallen, stormed "with all the cruelties in the world, sparing neither sex nor age," Woerden was desperately besieged, and the Spaniards, threading their way at night among the lagoons, had stricken the Prince a grievous blow by seizing Duiveland.

CHAPTER XVI

GENERAL UNION IN SIGHT

VERY ominous was this Spanish advance. Three principal islands lay between the Scheldt and the Meuse—Tholen, Duiveland and Schouven, whereon was Zierickzee. The first had been in Spanish hands since Mondragon's amazing march; the second had now been taken; and Mondragon had crossed to Schouven and laid siege to Zierickzee. William and the States were faced with imminent danger of final overthrow. It must have seemed somewhat ironical to William that just at the time John (making the common mistake of thinking that the affairs of a man who had just married must be thriving) should write for a repayment of the enormous sums owing him. The Prince replied that the States were almost bankrupt and that just then it was an impossibility even to raise funds to carry on the war. John, good man, did not dream of pressing further, and his next letters are full of affectionate reference to the affairs of William's children and the family at Dillenburg. Might not Mary be married now? Where should Maurice go to finish his education? Juliana's husband Gunther has the gout. Meanwhile Orange set desperately to work to prepare to beat off the last fierce assault of the Grand Commander. A week before his wedding he had assisted at a provincial union between Holland and Zeeland. They gave him jointly the supreme command that Holland alone had given him the year before. His advice that the Estates

should take steps towards independent incorporation with the Empire—his resourceful ingenuity was never exhausted—was not listened to; but he was authorized to consider how and what foreign aid might be obtained for the Provinces in their extremity. To him and to him alone the Dutch looked to save them. He would do it if, working heart and soul, he could. But, practical statesman that he was, he insisted, as was his custom, on his *quid pro quo*; as also was his custom, on something which he wished to force on the Estates for their own benefit. They demanded that he should suppress “the Catholic cult”. The satisfaction of this sectional desire must he knew irretrievably wreck all chances of that general union of the Provinces which was always enthroned in his imagination; it would alienate the Catholic South for ever. He forced these Calvinist zealots to substitute the phrase “all religion not consonant with the gospel,” which left his hands free.

That was in June, 1575. The great Spanish sweep of successes in the archipelago came, victories won over dogged resistance by audacious attack. In Zeeland and South Holland the people temporarily recoiled into panic. The storm was at their doors and for some weeks the rebellion was on the brink of collapse, whilst William, impotent, was a virtual prisoner in the hands of his own despairing followers. All the world thought that the end had come. “I hear,” wrote Berty to Viglius, “that there is great trouble at Dort and that the Prince spends his nights in a galley.” To get his wife out of reach of the populace he sent her to Leyden, pretending that she was going to Brill to fetch the child of an important officer; and she only just missed being captured by Colonel Verdugo. “Those of Dort,” reported the English emissary Bodenham to Burleigh, “keep the Prince in their town and will not let him go, saying

that he shall fare as they do and have charged him with demands to know whether he were a Papist or a Protestant". "These mad heads of Holland," ran another letter from the same man, "care not if Holland were lost and think themselves able to displease all the world." George Southwick put the discontent down to the marriage: "St. Aldegonde who contracted the marriage is out of favour with the commons. . . . Out of Holland the people prepare to fly into England," and Daniel Rogers (who was biassed) informed Burleigh that the Hollanders would willingly expel Orange to secure safety. Small wonder that Philip's fanatical ambassador Guaras in London was able to write exultingly: "Everybody here believes that Holland and Zeeland will soon be lost and fugitives are arriving at Dover from Flushing, and Orange himself will doubtless fly hither, because he dare not go to Germany where he owes large sums of money to those whom he has deceived and in consequence of the quarrels he has with the relatives of his first wife who is still alive". But the popular access of fear and surly resentment against the Prince was a short phase. Requesens, who might have taken Rotterdam had he pushed on, failed to make the most of the military advantage he had gained in Zeeland. The common folk, always the Prince's chief stay, rallied to him again, and in October he summoned the Estates to Rotterdam. He was resolved that the events of these months should not be repeated; whilst the war lasted he must be master, and he delivered an ultimatum. He was fighting their cause, not his own, said he; either they must patch up the best peace they could with Philip or they must practically renounce his sovereignty and seek the protection of some foreign Prince. The perturbed delegates were given a few days in which to sound their constituents; the feeling of

the masses ran strongly with the Prince, and the Estates reassembled in the old town of Delft to agree that the Spanish connexion must, if he deemed it necessary, be cast off. But where to turn? Germany, to which William still sent constant appeals via John, was lethargic nowadays where it was not hostile. The Prince himself favoured France whither St. Aldegonde and Junius had already gone on a political mission. England was a poor crutch. Throughout the year there had been very strained relations with Elizabeth on account of the maritime depredations of the Flushingers whom Burleigh not unjustly described as being "a rabble of pirates or worse". In April the Queen, policy just then dictating good relations with Madrid, had taken a drastic step against the rebels, issuing to the Warden of the Cinque ports orders (which Daniel Rogers said the Prince "stomached not a little") "to prevent the landing of the Prince of Orange or any of his aiders and abettors in the conspiracy against the King of Spain and also to prevent them receiving any aid, succour or relief in men, armour and victuals".¹ Approached by the Prince in August she had declined to accept Zeeland in return for 2000 recruits. Spite of all this William's friends obstinately preferred to proffer the sovereignty of the Netherlands rather to her than to the French King or his brother Anjou. She, taking alarm when she heard that St. Aldegonde and his fellows had gone to France (with which same country she was just then playing by pretending a desire to marry Anjou whom she despised), changed her course so far as to consent to receive envoys. St. Aldegonde, Paul Buys and two others were sent to London therefore. They lingered on through the winter months into the spring, William

¹ Hatfield MS., quoted by Martin Hume in "The Great Lord Burghley".

in Holland fretting that his plans must remain so long in suspense. He was right in suspecting that small profit was to be gained from Elizabeth who was playing her usual balancing game. Secret instructions she gave her ambassadors that year reveal her subtle double dealing. Sir Henry Cobham, sent to Madrid, was to reassure Philip. "If he knew how often and earnestly she has been solicited to take possession of Holland and Zeeland he might say that he never had such a friend as she has been." But Philip should seriously consider giving the Netherlanders their rights and freedom from the inquisition lest the French King should have those countries at his devotion. John Hastings, sent in October to Orange, was to warn the Prince not to seek help from France (*sic*) but to point out that she could do nothing overt, for that would mean war "whereof the issue is most uncertain except that thereby her own country and people would be wasted". Constantly supplied with exhaustive memoranda by the sagacious Burleigh she trimmed and trimmed. She politely informed a messenger from indignant Requesens that she could not send St. Aldegonde and Buys away as they were faithful subjects of Philip's. But fearing to risk the Spanish wrath too much she was cold and curt to the Prince's representatives. All that time that she kept them waiting (says Froude) she made them, contrary to all custom, pay for their own board and lodging. She told them she was poor and could not afford to take over Holland and Zeeland. At last she said she might at most garrison Walcheren. St. Aldegonde asked for better terms. Well, she said, they must wait for Parliament to meet; and when the House assembled she repudiated the arrangement altogether, and would not allow the question to be raised. Sick with the delays the envoys of

the forsaken Provinces stayed on whilst William—lamenting that “if the Queen had made up her mind sooner she might have done us great good, but now we have lost opportunities through her”—saw the horizon grow darker and more dark. It is said that pent there alone in the little Dutch towns with Requesens’ grip contracting round the coast and no help coming from abroad, Orange for the first time fell into the nethermost abysses of despair. He did not meditate surrender so base as that which had been contemplated a year before by imprisoned Aldegonde. Wearied with hope deferred and a fight apparently interminable (so says an uncorroborated chronicler) he thought of collecting all his people at the ports, putting them and their movables on shipboard, and sailing out towards the setting sun for a freer region, after cutting the dykes and leaving for the oppressor a devastated and flooded land. The thing was scarcely practicable in its completeness, and carried through partially it would have meant leaving a helpless remnant for Philip’s maw. William never hints at such a scheme in his letters, and if ever he contemplated it it could have been only in some very transient fit of morbidity. In any case it would have been abandoned, for in March, 1576, an event occurred which changed the face of affairs and ultimately for a while left William the Silent master of the situation and leader of United Netherlands. Requesens died.

The Grand Commander, snatched away after a week’s illness, really left the royalist cause in a condition little better than that in which he had found it. He had come like Alva with the idea that he would soon put an end to these petty troubles, but like Alva he had found that the Provincial Estates which held the purse-strings (“God deliver us from them,” ejaculated he)

would not furnish him with the wherewithal properly to drive his attack home, and that the Dutch were incredibly tenacious in the defence. His great Zeeland swoop at the end of the previous summer had utterly terrified the rebels for a time, but before Ziericksee it had stopped dead. The high Spanish billow reached a tide mark and was spent. When Requesens died Ziericksee which had been keeping the flower of the royal troops cold and impatient outside its walls for months was still untaken and cheery.

Neither Philip nor anyone else had anticipated the Governor's decease. No successor in the office had been thought of, much less appointed, and Requesens himself had not nominated a stop-gap. The Council of State took over the Government. It had seven members, three of them old ones—shallow Aerschot, Berlaymont, who had been one of the Blood Council's judges and was the coiner of the term "Beggars," and President Viglius—and four new men, including three insignificant Netherlanders and one Spaniard, Jerome de Roda, who considered himself the cream of the lot. The council (thereby aggrieving the Spanish commanders) made Count Peter Mansfeld *Generalissimo* and Governor of Brussels, and reported to Philip, pleading that he should send a new Regent at once with money or the means of getting it, in order to restrain the licentious soldiery whose insolent excesses were again rousing the southern Provinces which had so long been sullenly quiescent. But the graver the crisis the more prolonged should be the pondering was Philip's motto and, ordering the Netherlands' authorities central and local to obey the council until further notice, he relapsed into meditation, cursing Requesens for having succumbed without warning and left his monarch in a fix. Granvelle advised him to send Margaret back; or he might appoint an

Austrian archduke ; or again there was his conceited and picturesque young illegitimate brother, Don John, the hero of Lepanto. The outcome of it was that he delayed decision month after month whilst, as shrewd old Viglius grumblingly forecasted to his crony Hopper at Madrid, every week of the interregnum strengthened the hands of William the Silent and his Beggars. The council, albeit its members were certainly neither disaffected nor soft-hearted, contained a strong party in favour of a modification of policy with a view to conciliation ; but there was nothing like unanimity on the point and in any case the council had neither final authority nor funds. As the behaviour of the Spanish regiments grew more outrageous William seized his opportunity and opened correspondence with men in every important city, preparing for a possible *coup d'état*.

In the spring Charlotte of Bourbon gave birth to a daughter. "I must tell you," wrote the Prince to his brother, that on the last day of March in the morning it pleased God to deliver my wife of a little girl, for which I thank the Almighty with prayer that it may advance his glory." In the same letter he alludes to the exasperating dilatoriness of Elizabeth, and, with some optimism, to the prospect of yet another conciliation (the "Peace of Monsieur," the fifth since the religious wars began, came next month) between the French Catholics and the Huguenots now led by the King's brother Anjou—formally Alençon. This augured well for the cause. Concluding, he returns to his domestic affairs. The Elector of Saxony—who, incidentally, was just making Germany resound with his declarations that he would have nothing to do with the remarried William—was asking to be given charge of Maurice, the Prince's eldest son by Anne of Saxony. William says that he would not object, but that he is anxious that Maurice, now at

Heidelberg with John's four sons, should have a better education than he was likely to get at Dresden. John replied, agreeing that it would be a scandalous thing to send the boy to Augustus since he was doing excellently at Heidelberg, and his tutor was reporting that he was showing signs of real genius. Maurice's subsequent career abundantly justified the pedagogue's predictions.

At the end of this month the most permanently precious fruit of the interregnum ripened. Holland and Zeeland, respited from the struggle for existence, had spent the interval since Requesens' demise not merely in attempting to recover from the terrible exhaustion produced by the war but in smoothing over their own stupid differences. On 25 April the Estates of the two Provinces which had been provisionally united in the previous autumn, sitting together at Delft at William's summons (or rather command), solemnly drew up a new Union. The Union of Delft provided that Holland and Zeeland should act together in war, should be taxed as one nation and should have free trade with each other. Each was left at liberty to revoke the arrangement at short notice; but failing revocation their frontiers for practical purposes disappeared and their joint Estates, assembled at any time by the Prince, were, with the cities directly represented and the countryside represented by the nobles, a tolerably adequate Parliament for a small and compact State.

William was assured of definitely guaranteed powers sufficiently ample to make him practical master of the domestic situation. He was ordained *still as deputy for the King* in every respect head of the State. The chief military and naval command was given him. He could garrison any place at will. New causes of litigation were to be referred to him. The taxes were to be im-

posed and collected by him in consultation with nine commissioners appointed by him at the Estates' nomination. From lists submitted by the assembly he was empowered to select men for all vacant governorships and magisterial posts, and it was made his business, the words being those he himself had insisted upon in the previous year, to control at his direction the exercise of public worship, providing no inquisition was made into any man's conscience. This Union made the Prince—always without prejudice to the vague dormant rights of a Sovereign for whom a successor had not yet been found—fountain of law, of justice and of executive action. Had he been so minded he might have persuaded the two Provinces even then to reject Philip's sovereignty outright and make himself King or perpetual president. His ambition did not lie that way. The time came when they actually pressed him to take a throne and he still refused. The temporal aspirations of the young man had gone with youth; William's first and last consideration now was the welfare of the Provinces; and he believed, and with great reason, that the Provinces would not be safe unless some great potentate was their suzerain.

He had some difficulty in pressing this need of a foreign connexion upon his obstinate Dutchmen. Yet it was very clear to him that these two small countries, forming together a narrow strip of sea-skirted land only a hundred miles in length, bled by the cost of the numerous wars, and denuded now not only of fighting men and money but even of cattle, could not attain more than a precarious footing on the rock of independence without the support of some friendly strong arm. The Estates, if they must renounce Philip, wished only to transfer his title to the man they already knew as "Father William". They did not want another

stranger. He pounded in with his argument and constrained them in the Act of Union to embody a clause giving him full authority to treat with the King of France (Henry the Third, formerly Anjou and King of Poland, had succeeded Charles the Ninth), with his brother Anjou (formerly Alençon) or with any other foreign Prince, with the end of transferring to one of them the sovereignty over Holland and Zeeland.

Elizabeth at last dismissed the delegates with a final unsatisfactory answer to the request made in the preceding year. She adjured the Estates to wait while she tendered advice to good King Philip and not to entangle themselves with other Powers. In brief she offered them nothing and demanded that in consideration for her generosity they should ask nothing from anybody else. Germany, where the quarrels of the old sects and the rise of a number of new ones (whose cacophonous names were in themselves enough to condemn them) had created a confusion whence all the efforts of wiser heads like the Landgrave of Hesse could evoke no semblance of a single line of action, was patently hopeless. Even the Estates had to realize that William had been right in pointing out France as the only possible ally and the Prince was at last able to follow his own course. Henry the Third and the Huguenots under his dilettante, debauched, spotty-faced brother Anjou had patched up their peace, and William reopened with that Duke, a poor instrument but the best available, communications which ultimately led to the Frenchman's personal intervention in the Netherlands. That, however, was as yet distant.

Ziericksee fell after a nine months' siege. Up to the last William made continual efforts to revictual it but in vain. A force of 2000 Scots was beaten off in one of these expeditions. In another stout Admiral Boisot,

hero of Leyden and a hundred sea-fights small and great, was drowned. "A gallant gentleman," was William's epitaph, "and one who has always been devoted heart and soul to the common cause." "My lord," sympathised the Prince's affectionate wife (who was often when he was away from his Delft home his chief channel of communication with the Estates), "I am very grieved that all your trouble has been wasted and that disaster has overtaken that great vessel and the poor admiral. I expect you will find it very hard to fill his place. . . . I am still very weak ; your daughter is well." With the least help in the world, lamented the Prince to his brother, "the poor town would never have fallen into the enemy's hands". France might have been less selfish now her domestic dissensions had ceased ; but people seemed all to be like that and it could not be helped.

Yet, as after Mook Heath, patient William soon saw himself profiting by the enemy's victory. The Spanish troops, unpaid for two years, once more mutinied. They had not been allowed to loot Ziericksee ; their officers' promises of wages fell on stony ground, and the whole army in Zeeland threw over its commanders (including even its old idol Mondragon himself) and appointed an Eletto. The mutineers crossed over to the mainland and began plundering ; the rich towns of Brabant trembled with apprehension. Mansfeld was sent by the State Council to bring them to reason ; he had no money and they jeered him out of camp. Up and down the country, east and west, the rebellious regiments roamed, threatening first Mechlin then Brussels itself ; and at last they fell suddenly upon Alost in Flanders, stormed it, killed many citizens, and placed the surrounding villages under toll. The whole exasperated South, Catholics and Protestants alike, armed. "Nullus ferme

in opificum turba," says the Jesuit historian, "nullus in agris colonus coemendis galeis aut sclopis non intentus." In Brussels the populace, knowing that the mutineers were threatening a bloody descent on them, demanded action, and the affrighted State Council responded with a decree the audaciousness of which was a measure of its impotence. The rebellious soldiers—thousands in number and possessing the citadels of Antwerp, Alost, Ghent, Valenciennes, Utrecht and other strongholds—were declared outlaws in the name of the King, and every man high or low was authorized to kill them with impunity. This was too much for Jerome de Roda, the one Spanish councillor, and he fled to Antwerp, which great city lay helpless with bloodthirsty companies straining at the leash in its midst, announced himself Philip's sole representative and began deluging the country with proclamations. The apprehensions of Brussels became acute and the people so incensed that such Spaniards as remained amongst them went about in fear of their lives.

The opportunity of rallying the South which William had so long awaited was at last before him and ever watchful he seized it. He rained arguments and pleas upon councils and governors and private citizens, with sublime skill addressing to each man the arguments most likely to influence him. Even the lifelong supporters of the old regime were nauseated by the behaviour of the Spanish troops and gave in to the Prince's reasoning. Hierges, Governor of Guelderland and son of Berlaymont himself is an example. William wrote him ardently evoking his honour, his love of country and his respect for the throne, for he asked no disloyalty, no illegality of him. "Let all you noblemen," he besought him, "drop your private quarrels and agree upon some course of action and by God's grace and to your own eternal

glory you will change into a gentle calm these horrible storms and calamities which afflict our poor country." Hierges hesitated awhile and presently was writing to win Bossu himself, still a prisoner in Dutch hands, to the new general movement of reform : " I am determined to join the Estates, not wishing to be the instrument of my country's enslavement and the means of cutting the throats of all my friends and relatives". Sooner or later almost every one of note was thus won over.

Amongst those with whom William was secretly corresponding at the end of the summer was a certain Seigneur de Hèze, a hot-headed young Brussels noble fit for any daring enterprise and for little else. This personage, finding feeling in the Brabant capital running so strongly against the Spanish and the council, formed a bold plan and confided it to Orange. The latter, knowing his man, egged him on by profuse flattery. " I cannot but send a line to congratulate you," wrote the Prince to de Hèze on 1 August (surely with a smile) " on behalf of the whole country which will be eternally grateful to yourself and your posterity, and to beg you with a constancy worthy of yourself and your ancestors courageously to carry through your splendid plan." De Hèze, who had become very popular with the crowd during the discontents, needed little encouragement. On 5 September with 500 troops he appeared before the ducal palace (formerly the scene of the Compromisers' interview with Margaret) within which the State Council was sitting, and demanded admittance in the name of the Estates of the Province. Entry was denied, and de Hèze's men promptly with axes and iron bars battered in the doors, rushed upon Berlaymont, Viglius and the other councillors " whom " (in the words of Elizabeth's sympathetic ambassador Dr. Wilson) " they took to their bosoms in furious

manner and carried to prison with the great good liking of the people, who now seemed to rule, making little of Duke or Council". Other cities, William wrote to Dillenburg, appeared likely to follow, and God's salvation was perhaps nigh. Other cities did follow, and he struck the hot iron. He launched out from Middelburg stirring manifestoes to the Estates of Brabant, of Flanders, of Artois, of Hainault, speaking as the mouthpiece of Holland and Zeeland their sisters. "Join with your neighbours," was his message to Flanders, "or prepare to stand for all time as a miserable example of ill-advised disunion (*misérable exemple de désunion malavisé*). Bravely and unanimously unite to end here and now this foreign violence which cannot be borne without undying infamy and utter ruin." The ground had been prepared. They were ripe for common action. The Estates of Brabant, which had (though vicariously) taken the plunge first, hurriedly at his suggestion posted messengers to the other thirteen Provinces which still remained Spanish, inviting them to send delegates to an immediate States-General at Brussels. The delegates assembled at once and received from the leader of the two Provinces one of those long eloquent patriotic messages in the composition of which he has never been excelled, an appeal offered diffidently but with conviction by one who protested himself concerned only for their welfare.

"Make an end of disunion," he appealed,¹ "some of you have taken an open and fearless line, others have done the reverse, either hoping to remain in favour or at least where delinquents are so many to find escape or mercy for not having done so ill as the others. Such division and disunion has bred distrust, true and almost sole mother of the ruin of republics

¹ This message is here condensed.

as all history plainly shows. Tear down shams therefore. Raise a firm general union, pledging each and all to put their hands to the work without dissimulation. Send, unanimously and openly, a messenger to the King, saying that you are all immutably resolved, though loyal subjects, to resist this insupportable Spanish tyranny to the last gasp. Tear off disguises! fling away the painted masks of those who play a double and hesitating game. It is impossible for a chariot to run on crooked or unevenly sized wheels. Only where there is equal obligation to pursue a common end is a confederation safe against disruption or perversion; wherefore the ancients, in forming such, used rituals, drank blood, or killed some beast, that he who should depart an inch from their sworn purpose might be accurst."

He told the States that Philip in 1559 had angrily remarked to him that if they had not powerful supporters they would not talk so loud. Let them show the King that the people whose charters he had torn up,

"great as well as small, small as well as great, prelates and abbots and monks, lords, gentlefolk, burgesses and peasants of whatever age sex or condition are determined to stand firm against this iniquitous tyranny".

The Dutch towns had done marvels; what might not the United Netherlands do? especially as foreign Princes would hasten to help them when their union became evident, Princes

"who have hitherto reckoned this thing as merely a rising of bucklers, a popular tumult which, like a wave of the sea, falls and is sated as soon as it has reared its crest. I tell you that countless men who have thought what you were doing would end in

smoke because of your inability to agree will know you as a firm-souled race, sworn to defend your liberties. You will serve as an example of virtue to all free peoples and of terror to all tyrants and evil oppressors of republics."

CHAPTER XVII

GHENT AND DON JOHN

THE consummation that William had always hoped for, that he had laboured to bring nearer with all his patient genius and indefatigable energy, was in sight. Years ago, before the exile and the invasions and the long fight in the two solitary revolting Provinces, he had led the whole Netherlands in a demand for the withdrawal of the Spanish garrison. Now the excesses of another Spanish garrison had again brought North and South, Catholic and Protestant together under his headship, and at his station at Middelburg he toiled day and night to make the new combination permanent and effective. Delegates from the fifteen Provinces met those of Holland, Zealand and the Prince at Ghent to frame a working basis of agreement. William, receiving daily reports of their conferences, urged them passionately to make haste. Rumour had it that Philip's half-brother Don John was coming; the Prince feared that given the opportunity and the temptation, the influential Catholics of the South might fall away when the new governor came, and the whole newly fabricated structure of general union tumble into pieces. He told them exactly what to do—to frame some outlined organization of confederacy which could be ratified by each Province, to provide immediately for the financial necessities of the country, and, since Don John was coming with full powers to annul them, to ratify all the acts of the State

Council and transfer its powers to a council composed of leading noblemen. Religious questions coming up, the delegates temporized day after day, the orthodox being loth to allow Protestantism in Holland and Zeeland to remain the established religion. William's letters to Ghent became more and more insistent. "Gentlemen," he wrote to the delegates on 28 October, "I hasten to tell you that people are warning me that under cover of this arrangement they (the Catholic party) wish to deceive us and that the proceedings are being dragged out in order that a reply may be received to certain proposals sent by special courier to Spain. I do not believe it, but . . . the delay is enough to make us suspicious." Not William's crafty exhortations, however, but the appalling doings of the Spanish mutineers finally brought the Ghent conference to an agreement. On 20 October Maestricht was sacked with all the horrid accompaniments of war; in the first week of November the blood of the Netherlands ran cold to hear that Antwerp, greatest of all the cities of the land, had suffered a like fate. Some thousands of bloodthirsty scoundrels from Alost marched in and were joined by the garrison in the citadel whom d'Avila, Romero, and de Roda were unable to restrain.¹ Granvelle's Catholic brother Champagny, and Aerschot's Catholic brother de Havré at the head of some regiments of Walloons and Germans had nobly attempted to stem the murderous tide, and a horde of poor ill-armed citizens had flocked into the streets to fight. But the "Spanish Fury" had carried all before it and, amid scenes as gruesome as anything the century had known, the whole town had been pillaged, and eight thousand of its men, women, and children slaughtered. Six days after these horrible

¹ So says Roda; but others that the captains made no attempt to check their men.

events the "Pacification of Ghent," a general agreement to expel the Spaniards at all costs, was signed, St. Aldegonde heading the signatories from Holland and Zeeland, Leoninus the rest. William's wise statesmanship and tolerant genius breathed through every article. All property, even ecclesiastical property, confiscated since the troubles began, was to be restored or compensation paid for it. All prisoners—William's son Buren, still languishing in Spain, was specially mentioned—were to be released. Pending a contrary decision of the Estates General (which were to meet in the old-time way) William of Orange was to retain his official positions in the two States participating in the Delft Union; the Estates General might also, if they thought fit, take over the debts William had incurred in the wars. The edicts were swept away; Protestants were to be allowed at least the right of private worship in the Catholic Provinces, and Holland and Zeeland were not to take active measures against the orthodox within their borders.

There was a considerable lack of sharp outline about the religious clauses. Definition would have meant division. Only an overmastering emergency and the patient efforts of a sleepless statesman had brought together the leading men in the two sections of the Provinces; and so thorough had been the polarization of religious opinion that only postponement of difficulties could keep them together. Such as it was, however, the Pacification was a wonderful triumph of dexterous diplomacy on the Prince's part, and he had the pleasure of seeing universally break out "a joy and content of the people so great that memory of man cannot recall anything like it". Hymns of thanksgiving went up in the churches, cannons were fired, and beacons blazed upon the little hills. Inspired with new vigour the

Prince's forces made renewed onslaughts against the Spanish garrisons and a sweep no less complete and rapid than that led by Requesens in the previous year was made. On 11 November the citadel of Ghent, which had been held by Spaniards throughout the conferences, was surrendered. The great fortress of Valenciennes was sold by its occupants in a few days; and before the year was out Friesland and Groningen had revolted and expelled the royal governor, supplanting him by a brother of Hoogstraten's; Mondragon had been driven out of his recent prize Ziericksee and the whole islands of Schouwen and Duiveland, and all Zeeland with the exception of Tholen was clean of Spaniards. Late in November Olivier van der Tympel on behalf of the Prince of Orange entered Brussels with St. Aldegonde and ten ensigns "not to the liking of the Duke of Aerschot but much to that of Monsieur de Heze and the people". William could not but have felt emotion when he received his captain's message: "I have lodged myself with three companies in the Palace of your Excellency, and put four companies in the Court and three in the lodging of M. d'Egmont". To those palaces, not seen for so long, old memories clung. After all those years of vicissitudes, the outlaw, the leader of forlorn rebel hopes, had come into his own again, and his recovery of his family dwelling was a symbol of the turn in his political fortunes. When 1577 opened all men looked to him (in the words of a Spaniard) "for he alone could save Belgium from ruin". His domestic enemies in the face of the enthusiasm of the people dared not open their mouths against him. A new epoch it seemed had opened and a new order begun; the Union of Brussels, signed by representatives of all churches and classes and provinces—an abbot headed the list—in January set the seal on them

by reaffirming the provisions of the Pacification of Ghent. Yet the settlement and his own supreme position were shakier than even the Prince himself realized. Not merely was the Pacification an inherently unstable arrangement, but in the very week which saw it signed a new and potent factor had come into the Netherland struggle of forces. Philip's new governor Don John had arrived at Luxembourg after having traversed France in the fantastic disguise of a Moorish slave.

This bastard of the late Emperor by a laundress was now in his thirty-second year, and ever since he had come of age had been one of the most arresting figures on the European stage. A brilliant adventurousness had marked his famous victories over Moor and Turk, and his appearance was as romantic as his career. Well built and athletic, with perfect Greek features, flashing eyes, crisp golden hair and trim fair moustache and beard, he rode through kingdoms as one born to rule, dazzling the crowd with the mingled imperiousness and charm of his manner. None yet had quite measured him; his brother feared and hated him; such an exterior, such pride and ambition, if wedded with a strong will and a patient courage, might melt the frontiers of a continent. But the gallant chevalier lacked just those qualities which most distinguished the man he had come to meet. He was essentially an egoistic dreamer, impatient to hoist his pennon on his gorgeous castles in the air. After his crusading exploits in the Mediterranean he would, but for Philip's intervention, have got the Pope to make him King of Tunis, whence he pictured himself trailing over a vanquished Africa and Asia like a Christian Tamerlane. Now he had come to the Netherlands not with the primary object of doing the work in hand for its own sake and restoring this troublesome corner of Europe to its allegiance. He could do that, he believed,

without difficulty, but his Governorship was to be merely a stone whence he was to spring into a higher saddle. Mary of Scotland, beautiful and a sufferer for the true faith, was languishing at Fotheringay. What more obvious duty for a knight-errant than to pacify the Provinces and then to sail over to England, rescue her, dethrone (and if necessary kill) Elizabeth the heretic, marry Mary and reign with her over three kingdoms? And—for as long as the imaginary picture was a grandiose one and himself the central figure in it Don John's fancy did not make scrupulous limitations—failing that, he might marry Elizabeth herself, who must surely be fascinated by his youth and glory. Don John was all eagerness to have done with his royal commission. Philip had empowered him to make concessions, vague and petty enough, but likely, if not to win the whole country, at least to recover Brabant, Flanders, and the other Catholic Provinces. The Governor on his own account was prepared to go still farther to gain his own ends.

William the Silent was immutably resolved that Don John should never be given the chance. It might be that the imperial youth meant to treat the Netherlanders in good faith; some of his actions and his letters to Madrid indicate that he did. The Prince of Orange, with the fortunes of the Union and of Holland and Zeeland in particular at stake, could not even contemplate such a possibility. "His designs," was William's comment immediately Don John had arrived, "are certain to be pernicious to the country, and if he is not checked he will bring us back into confusion and misery even greater than we have suffered in the past"; and even before the Governor had come the Prince had been talking to St. Aldegonde of the "vain persuasions and deceptive language of the said Don John". Even if the latter himself could be trusted—and those who stress his



DON JOHN OF AUSTRIA
FROM AN ENGRAVING BY C. SICHEM

plaintive protestations of sincerity cannot say how he might have behaved had William ever allowed him to grasp power—what trust could be reposed in Philip? That leopard would not change his spots. It was incredible that after so long he should have abandoned his intention to crush the Provinces or been cured of the theological disease which was the origin of that determination. Men in the Netherlands shuddered as reports went about of the Pacification's effect at Madrid; how Philip was enraged, how money was being collected for another army, how eighty-eight mules laden with silver had been led into Barcelona, how Alva was talking of coming back and leaving no stone of Antwerp or Brussels on another. "They commonly say there," one fresh from Spain told the Brussels council, "that they would like to cut open the bellies of our women and thrust the men's heads into them and smother them with their blood, and that they would compel our people to cultivate the soil with their nails." Never more could a Spaniard be trusted. What Don John really meant to do, did not interest William; Don John did not count and no risks could be run. The Prince with calm deliberateness and a dogged pertinacity at times verging on moral cruelty set to work to break the young Governor.

For two years a conflict went on between the two unevenly-matched wills. The incidents of this period are so numerous and, ultimately, so fruitless that it is neither possible nor desirable to set most of them down here. The key to William's policy is his firm resolve not to let Don John gain a footing, much less to come to any agreement with him which bore even a superficial semblance of finality; for he knew that at the very first opportunity the Catholic nobles, a shallow crew who detested the Calvinists and were jealous of their leader, would desert. Whenever William perceived in any

friendly quarter a tendency to come to terms he launched forth a warning against Spanish treachery. Whenever Don John yielded on some point, William forthwith produced a new set of demands. The Governor might give as much as he liked ; he should get nothing. He must be harassed and baffled until anxiety and impotence reduced him to despair. From this line the Prince never shrank.

Don John's troubles began at once. The Governor was in Luxembourg unable to move, and he was forced to open negotiations with the Estates-General. Inspired by William they demanded the withdrawal of the Spanish veterans, the ratification of the Pacification of Ghent, and the convocation (as they were really a mere Convention) of the Estates. Don John would agree to the first request. He pictured himself leading these thousands of bronzed veterans to England and tried to stipulate that the withdrawal should be by sea. Unable to reveal his motives he found the Estates at once suspecting some sinister design aimed at themselves and insisting that the army should go by land—which meant a wearisome journey over the snow-covered highlands on the eastern frontiers of Burgundy and France. Concealing his anger as best he could, Don John conceded this ; and William was at once beset with fears that the non-popular Catholic-aristocratic party in the Estates would succumb to the influence of the gracious new-comer. Secretly leagued with de Hèze, Lalain, and other of his Brussels partisans he stirred up resentment against Don John for his refusal to ratify at once the Pacification. For a short while it seemed that he would succeed in bringing about a rupture, especially as Don John was bursting out irately against the Estates. But the Union of Brussels (“*Foedus invalescere seque contra tantam molem imparem cernebat*”) brought the Governor to a sense of his isolation ; Aerschot and other reactionary state councillors and

nobles worked desperately to check William, and at the beginning of February the Prince received at Middelburg a notice from the Estates that Don John had signed a "Perpetual Edict" in ratification of the Ghent treaty. He did not answer at once and the Estates, a little uneasy, again wrote, protesting that his own position was unimpaired. William in truth was dismayed. He had not desired a concordat, however favourable, with Don John. He had meant to make sure of a refusal by asking too much. After thought he replied to the Estates that they should have asked for more and complained that they had not insisted on his son Buren's release, that they had no guarantees for the withdrawal of the troops, and that the Edict had made no mention of foreign powers. Don John found that William's moral influence over the country was as yet intact. The man was the people's leader, wrote he to Philip; only by winning him over would they be able to pacify the country. William, coolly doing his best to ruin the agreement, scoffed at the idea that the troops were going. But in April, Don John and Elizabeth having advanced money for their pay, the Spanish soldiery actually did go, amid general delight and execration. William still remained firm in his attitude—"if one attributed to the Prince," writes the warmest of his modern adherents, "the continuation of the troubles one would not be far wrong". Leoninus and Schetz, his old acquaintances, came to Gertruydenberg to reason with him; so did Aerschot and Hierges, now relapsing fast into their old position. William, doing all he could to retain the affections and keep awake the suspicions of the common folk, stoutly accused the protesting ambassadors of plotting to put down the reformed religion. Don John, who had entered Brussels in tremendous pomp shortly after the departure of the troops, was bewildered and stung. He had been as fascinating, as courteous to

high and low as he knew how, and this obdurate perversity was all the thanks he got for it. The poor cavalier's letters to the King began to be frenzied. Orange, he declared, loathed Philip more than anything on earth; "si le pudiesse, never la sangre lo haria"—if William could he would drink Philip's blood. He sent his secretary Escovedo to Philip begging for help and counsel; none came, for Philip now suspected him of plotting the seizure of the Spanish Crown. Brooding over his wrongs he withdrew from Brussels, powerless against the masterly subtlety of William's diplomacy, and fell back on force—which was the very best thing he could do from William's point of view. Intoxicated with a desire to assert himself, after entertaining wonderful Marguerite de Valois at Namur he seized the citadel on a sudden impulse. William forthwith denounced this as a justification of all his prophecies, and circulated letters, possibly forged—for he stopped at no means, saving always and only assassination, to gain good ends—in which Don John declared that "only blood and fire" remained as a possible policy. The South lapsed into a condition of chaos. Don John without troops or a safe retreat was in daily fear of being murdered, and a welter of intrigues went on. Daily it became clearer that William of Orange was the one man to put things straight, and a general demand arose that he should come down and help them. Antwerp, his own city, turned out Don John's governor, and knowing William's wishes demolished its citadel; Ghent followed suit. William who was in North Holland repairing the dykes knew that the hour had come, and "marvellously occupied with business," foreign and domestic, surrounded by a crowd of envoys, moved southwards to Utrecht where the people received him with a delirious joy and love that was not decreased when he sprang from his carriage to

lift into its parents' arms a little child which had accidentally been killed by his horse's hoofs. He lingered awhile, avoiding the appearance of precipitancy and advising the Estates regarding their negotiations with Don John who was now frantically offering them almost every conceivable concession, provided only they would leave him something more than the shadow of a governor's authority and dignity. At last a formal invitation to visit Brussels reached William, the jealous aristocratic party not daring to attempt to prevent it. Leaving anxious Charlotte and his family behind at Gertruydenburg, William, believing that the general union for which he had schemed in despite of so many obstacles, political, personal, racial and religious, was on the point of achievement, entered his blackened Antwerp on 18 September, John, who had come from Dillenburg, at his side. Thence, with an escort of decorated barges he went in state along the canal to Brussels.

Miles from the town he was met by thousands of Brusselers who had swarmed out along the canal banks to meet the people's hero. At the place of landing, Aerschot, with rankling heart, and a band of nobles welcomed him. Happy and full of hope for his schemes he entered the city amid the plaudits of the populace. "Prepared at last to trample out a sovereignty which had worked its own forfeiture," he was contemplating the invitation of some foreign Prince, probably Anjou, to assume the throne, and his first act was to persuade the Estates, to the secret disgust of the aristocratic party, to send Don John an ultimatum which the latter could not possibly accept. Don John, railing vehemently, retreated to Luxembourg; the Estates elected a new State Council (on which William, for Holland's sake, declined to serve), and the breach appeared at last irreparable.

This year had been perhaps the busiest of the

Prince's diplomatic life. The mass of his correspondence is astounding. Most of it, directed to Don John, his representatives, the chief nobles, the Estates of the various Provinces, his friends in the cities, was domestic. But his foreign relations still continued. Disregarding the discouragements of his friends he kept up communications with Anjou whom the Netherlanders disliked and Henry of Navarre whom they detested. With Elizabeth too he exchanged letters, though the Queen, in spite of her Netherland Ambassador Wilson's ardour for the cause, was of little assistance. When, in June, Charlotte of Bourbon had a second daughter, she called her Elizabeth and wrote to the Queen to say that she hoped with the name her child would acquire those singular virtues which had made Elizabeth peerless among Princes. This wife of Orange's was of very great use and consolation to him. She was a reliable medium of communication with the Hollanders when he was away, and her splendidly encouraging letters fed his self-confidence. Always what she writes breathes a deep love: "Your note in my convalescence will do me more good than anything in the world"; "I break your head with my trivial things, my lord, but I must know your wishes"; "Please promise that you will not go out so often to dine in the evenings, they tell me the citizens are anxious about it"; "I beg you take better care of your health than you have been doing, for mine depends upon it and (after God) all my happiness". Once somebody has sent for the Prince a cup embossed with a serpent and a lizard. "As for the symbolism," she writes, "the lizard's property is said to be that when one is sleeping and a snake is about to bite one the lizard wakes one up. I think, monsieur, that you are the lizard who wakes the Estates fearing they will be bitten. God with his grace preserve them from the serpent."

Other members of his devoted family constantly wrote him. His mother, now not far from the tomb, exhorted him never to make a dishonourable peace or to forget that things eternal must always be counted above the things of this world. He did not hear direct from his eldest son whom, so false rumour had it, Philip was about to make Archbishop of Toledo; but the poor prisoner in Spain managed to smuggle through letters to John at Dillenburg, thanking him "for the continual help and assistance you have so loyally given my father in his adversities," and ardently hoping that "the Spaniards will be smashed beyond hope of escape". Buren was still his father's son, and later threw a man out of window for speaking insultingly of William. Marie, William's eldest daughter, now of marriageable age, was a pride and solace. "Dearest father," runs a typical letter, "I do wish that wishing could bring you here that you might have a little recreation ("affin que euis eung peu du pastan"—her spelling is quaint) for I am sure you never get anything but heaps of business and muddlings of the head. It makes me sad to think of it all." A postscript about her sister conjures up a vivid picture of the two young girls in the German castle. "My sister Anne asks me to give you her love. She would have written herself but couldn't ("yl n'y at poient sté pousibele"—!) because she has such a bad headache." The Prince, now that he had a permanent home, at last felt that he could safely have his elder children with him, and in the late summer of 1577, when John of Nassau came to Gertruydenburg (just before the visit to Antwerp) he brought Marie, Anne and Maurice with him. Their young stepmother was not too wrapped up in her own babies to give them a tender welcome.

CHAPTER XVIII

PARMA AND THE BAN

THE greeting William received in Brussels testified to the hope reposed in him by the commons. But his footing was as unstable as it was exalted; the topmost pinnacle in the Netherlands was the giddiest. The Catholic Provinces wished his strong arm against Spain, but watched his every movement jealously lest he should attempt to impose on them the Calvinism or the republicanism of his Dutch. And the nobles, the men who had only entered into temporary relations with him during the confusion after Requesens' death, intrigued incessantly against the man of whom they were so jealous and whose religion so nauseated them. "The hatred of the great personages of this realm against religion," wrote Sir Amyas Paulet to Leicester, "ys deadlye and irreconciliable". . . . To detached watchers the Low Countries were a very cauldron of conflicting aims and passions. "*Confusum chaos*" was the Landgrave's description, and John of Nassau saw "slackness, envy, greed, thickheadedness everywhere". William had scarcely undertaken his "gallows-journey" (as John called it) to the capital when he found himself confronted by a rival whom the jealousy-gnawed cabal of State councillors brought in to supplant him. This was the Archduke Matthias of Austria, a weak and amiable young son of the late Emperor, who, tempted by the prospect held out to him of a great realm, and possibly the hand of Philip's daughter, had furtively absconded from Vienna in his

nightshirt. William had been falling back more and more upon the common people. On the very day of his arrival in Brussels he is said to have fraternized in diplomatic affection with drapers, butchers and pilots, and Demos was at his back even though the nobles were against him. Craftily taking the least expected and least dangerous course he piqued his adversaries by strongly supporting Matthias' candidature for the Governor-Generalship, and, when the Archduke approached the capital, marching out to welcome him at the head of an immense concourse. Here was generosity and self-sacrifice. The Estates-General of Brabant forthwith elected him to the Ruwardship—the office was that of a qualified dictator—of the Province, and Matthias, soft and pliable, became his protégé and tool. The Prince's position had been strengthened by his enemies. Elizabeth, fearing French intervention, backed him financially, and in December the States-General formally deposed Don John from his offices and declared him a public foe. Three days later the consummate patience and reconciliatory skill of Orange bore its most strange—though, alas, short-lived—fruit in the new union of Brabant, in which, signed by the whole seventeen Provinces, Protestants and Catholics were put on an absolutely equal footing and won mutual toleration. At the end of December, 1577, William went to Ghent where he restored order. His friends, headed by the demagogues Ryhove and Imbize, had seized the governor Aerschot (who cursed them for traitorous Orangists) and established a provisional government. William had certainly connived at the stroke, and though he released Aerschot, he left his two rascally windbags of confederates in supreme authority, with results disastrous to himself later on.

Whatever William might have done to consolidate

union, so to say, *in vacuo*,—and as has been indicated, the internal obstacles were immense—his prospects of success were irretrievably ruined by the return of the Spanish army with a new commander. Philip, recovering from his long inertia, had ordered the troops to leave Italy again for the scene of their old ravages, placing at their head Alexander Farnese, Prince of Parma, and son of Duchess Margaret. Parma, who reached Don John in 1578, was a soldier as great as Alva, and had gifts of statesmanship of which Alva was flagrantly devoid. Proud as Lucifer—at the time of his youthful marriage during his mother's regency his haughtiness had stung the Netherland nobles—his pride had the solid basis of conscious and undeniable genius and power over men. His long head with its back-brushed hair, thin temples, commanding eyes, strongly moulded nose, sweeping cavalry moustache and pointed beard, was carried erect, and revealed the man born to be obeyed, ignorant of nothing but contemptuous of much, without fear, scruple or tenderness, master most of all of himself and his own anger. He meant to bring down William's loosely jointed edifice like a pack of cards. Arrived but a month he led Don John and his army against the forces of the States under Mansfeld, falling upon them at Gemblours near Namur and utterly routing them. The Sambre Valley was secured at a blow. William and Matthias had to leave Brussels, no longer safe, for Antwerp. As very slight compensation, Amsterdam, for so long the Spanish black patch in Holland, had turned the foreigners out and come over to the patriot side. William, again forced to work feverishly whilst waiting upon events, persuaded John to take the Governorship of Guelderland, supervised the fortification of the southern cities that remained to him, and pushed on his negotiations for foreign assistance.

It was a crowded and indefatigable time for Orange, yet to us who look back after three centuries, a dull one because so little came of the work he did. Under the sleepless gaze of Parma, calmly prowling like some great beast around William's little fold, the Prince toiled to raise fencings which might save his flocks. Elizabeth of England, to whom Matthias leaned, once more cooled off because William insisted on keeping up his relations with the French. Two other foreign Princes were on the borders, the German Duke Casimir, son of the Elector Palatine, and Anjou, the curled, faithless, rotten-bodied brother of the French King. Casimir had an army of sorts and was full of big talk. The Calvinists cried for him, fearful as ever of French influence, but William knew him and his of too small power to avail much. Anjou had been summoned by the Walloons of the South, who wished neither Don John nor Orange; and William, true to his old policy, entered into close relations with him. In July, we find Anjou writing from Mons to the man whom he had been meant to oust, but who was drawing him as he had drawn Matthias: "I want us to have a good understanding so that keeping step with equal zeal we may filch from the enemy the hope he has based on the division he tries by subtle means to foster between us . . . safety depends on our mutual comprehension, perfect union and concord". William's position, in the fermenting Provinces, beset by false friends and treacherous enemies, endeavouring to secure allies without losing allies, striving to dominate Matthias, Casimir, Anjou at once, caressing the uneasy yoke-fellows of the Union chariot, was a terribly difficult one. Correspondence and conference, argument, exhortation, cajolery, all were employed month after month; men were so unreliable, aspirations so confused, opinions so chequered, policies so unstable

and kaleidoscopic, that nothing but a hand-to-mouth statesmanship was possible. William found himself compelled to cast himself clean over upon Anjou, who had been called in as his rival, and whom he himself had encouraged at first only with the thought of inciting the jealous Elizabeth to come forward with the help which all her counsellors were pressing her to give. In August, 1578, a formal treaty was concluded between the States and Anjou whereby the Duke was made defender of the Netherlandish liberties, guaranteed the constitution, and promised to provide 12,000 horse and foot on condition that a like number was provided by the States. If the Sovereign were repudiated Anjou should have first claim to the succession, and the Medici's son agreed to ally himself with Elizabeth, Casimir, and King Henry of Navarre, rank heretics all. Less than two months after this agreement had been concluded and before it had borne any fruit, Don John, broken in body and spirit, died in his camp on the heights above Namur. His troops had sustained a defeat at Rignemants, he had no money wherewith to organize a new campaign, Philip had neglected his piteous appeals for advice and murdered his secretary Escovedo. In his delirium he babbled of great deeds done; just before the end he became calm again and his passing was peaceful. He nominated Parma as his successor.

That autumn there was again trouble in Ghent whither Duke Casimir had gone to claim money for his Germans and where the demagogues Imbize and Ryhove were now, after the manner of successful demagogues, at loggerheads. There were religious riots. The Reformers sacked the churches, and Hessels, the ancient member of the Council of Blood, was pulled out of prison, and killed. William, sick at heart, went in person to the city and pacified it. But the state of

things at Ghent was merely symptomatic of the general condition of the provinces, and William saw himself deserted by both the boastful Princes who had come to his help, Casimir withdrawing to Germany and thence to England, Anjou retiring to France with the observation to the States-general that reconciliation with Philip was the best thing that could happen to them. The malcontent nobles, seduced by Parma's bribes, were deserting wholesale; Alexander, whose faith in men's integrity was not great, even attempting to win the Prince himself by promises. All Orange's personal popularity with the masses could not keep incompatibles together. The Walloons in the South had let their Catholicism get the upper hand of their patriotism, and took over Anjou's troops when he disbanded them. The republican Calvinists of Holland, throwing pledges to the winds, again began persecuting the Catholics, and in every city there were fiercely antagonistic parties all discontented with the Prince's policy. He, man of views too wide for his contemporaries, strove to show them all not merely the injustice, but the futility, of intolerance and repression—even Anabaptists he would allow free worship. They assented to his local and national concordats and then shivered them. St. Aldegonde, John of Nassau himself, complained of his attitude. Each man wished his own faith to be tolerated in alien regions, but deemed tolerance of an alien faith in his own neighbourhood to be folly, and treachery to his God.

In January, 1579, the final split came; the principle of polarization triumphed in two Unions, a Northern and a Southern. For many months John of Nassau, who had always been suspicious of the French alliance and whose Protestantism was intransigent, had been tenaciously scheming a political and religious union of Holland,

Zeeland, Friesland, Guelderland, Utrecht, which should be self-contained and exclude the less revolutionary provinces of the South. William's feelings toward the arrangement were conflicting. In so far as it provided a nucleus of rebellion which would remain firm whatever else fell away, he could not but approve of it; for, passionately as he clung to his hope of permanent General Union, he was not so blind to facts as to ignore the direction in which affairs were drifting. But on the other hand segregation of the more Protestant and "advanced" States was bound to accelerate the pace and increase the strength of the forces making for division. He held aloof, but the combination crystallized without him, and though for some time, irresolute to seal it, he withheld his countenance from it, the Union of Utrecht became an accomplished fact. Delegates met in the hall of the Academy of Utrecht under John's presidency. The five confederate Provinces—Groningen and Overijssel came in later—while retaining extensive rights of autonomy, forfeited their rights of making separate treaties to the General Assembly to which the Executive Council was to be responsible and agreed on common taxation and a common monetary system. This confederacy, under guidance of William and his successors, developed into the Republic of the seven United Provinces. Almost simultaneously was formed by the Catholic Provinces on the French border the Union of Arras, which, before the spring was over, had come to terms with Parma, with the old stipulations that the rights of its constituents should be respected and that the foreign soldiery should go.

During that year of 1579 the Spanish made yet another attempt to kill the rebellion by detaching its head. A conference met at Cologne summoned by the Emperor; envoys went thither from the Emperor, the

German Princes, Parma, the Pope, Spain and the Netherlands. Negotiations were spun out for months, William, through Brunynck, warily endeavouring to protract them as long as possible without ever abating by a jot his old irreducible minimum of demanded concessions—civil and religious liberty and no Spanish troops. The Duke of Terranova, Philip's representative, tried to weaken him with huge bribes. Full restoration of honours and estates was offered him; release of his eldest son, 400,000 crowns; "they would have given me a million if I would have taken it," he said; but though willing to quit the Netherlands once their safety was guaranteed, he could not be beguiled from his people otherwise. His activity continued; now he is haranguing the Estates to pursue the country's defence with more ardour and erect a junta to conduct it, now quelling a fanatical Protestant uprising at Antwerp, now going again to disorderly Ghent, pacifying it and expelling the ill-conditioned popular leaders who were responsible for the broils. Nevertheless disruptive forces continued to work. By the sword and diplomacy Parma made headway. He besieged Maestricht which held out gloriously for four months, but fell at last before his relentless scientific investment and met a fate as horrible as that of Haarlem years before. William had promised to come to its help, but had not the means; and the city's fall shattered his credit in the South irretrievably. Men began accusing him of cowardice and impotent boastfulness; he was the man who tempted the innocent to follow him and then failed them in their hour of need. City after city was falling before Parma. The great nobles had deserted one by one, and the last went with Rennenburg, Hoogstraten's brother and William's trusted friend, who accepted Parma's gold and delivered over Groningen. A letter accusing William of double dealing was sent to the States-

General ; he took it into his own hand, read it aloud, and offered to go if it were believed. In these straits, while yet Antwerp, Ghent, and the central provinces were to be saved, his one hope lay in the French who had so often broken when leant upon. Yet nobody else wanted them. The Dutch hated Anjou and we find Orange's friend Lazarus de Schwendi writing, as spokesman for German feeling, beseeching him not to commit himself too far with the "lubriques et frauduleux François"—"the slimy and treacherous French". He replies (March, 1580) with the bitter comment on the general situation, "Donec eris felix, etc." (friends are fair-weather birds) and asked on the particular point "what title shall we give to the Spaniards and the Spaniardized" if the French are accused of slipperiness and fraudulence? In March, 1580, he left Antwerp in the charge of the devoted Charlotte—now mother of four daughters—and went to Holland, which he had seen rarely of late. The States were difficult to deal with. They resolved to put the Prince's name on all official papers and wished him to assume Philip's ancient title of Count of Holland ; but it took time to persuade them to countenance his suggested relations with Anjou. At length he succeeded and left the Hague again for Antwerp. Shortly afterwards his loneliness was increased by the final departure from Guelderland of his elder brother. John of Nassau had sickened of the Netherlandish turmoil and could not approve of his brother's policy ; he was nostalgic and above all wished to marry again. That same summer the Nassaus' old mother died at Dillenburg, full of years and griefs. She was seventy-six and had seen three of her five sons killed ; but her interest in her family, her saintly fortitude, her mental and spiritual energy, remained intact to the last.

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A new stroke of Philip's now put a new complexion on the face of affairs. When the Cologne negotiations at last broke down, Philip and his counsellors had agreed that some new and more drastic means must be taken to put an end to William the Silent's career. A public incital to murder was urged. Granvelle pressed Philip to offer a reward for Orange's head. The mere consciousness of proscription, suggested this expert in psychology, would suffice to send William half dead with fear. Ever since the Prince first took the field he had been in constant danger of assassination. But the attempts made hitherto had been sporadic and fortuitous in their origin. The celebrated "Ban" which Philip now launched (dated March, and published in July, 1580) openly and avowedly set the Prince up as a mark, and by promise of vast rewards incited every adventurer ready to risk death for a fortune to shoot at him. Follow the more salient passages of it :—

"Ban and Edict in form of proscription made by his Majesty the King our sire against William of Nassau Prince of Orange, as chief disturber of the state of Christendom ; and especially of these low countries : By which all men are authorized to kill him and rid the world of him as a public pest, with a reward to him who will do it or will assist in it.

"Philip by the grace of God King of Castile, of Leon, of Avignon, of Navarre, of Naples, of Sicily, of Mallorca, of Sardinia, of the Isles, Indies and terra firma of the Oceanic Sea, Archduke of Austria, Duke of Burgundy, of Lothier, of Brabant, of Limburg, of Luxemburg, of Guelderland and of Milan : Count of Hapsburg, of Flanders, of Artois, of Burgundy, Palatine and of Hainault, of Holland, of Zeeland, of Namur and of Zutphen, Prince of Zvvane, Marquis of the Holy Empire, Seigneur of Friesland, of Salins, of Mechlin, of the alies townes

and countries of Utrecht, of Overyssel and of Groningen and Dominator in Asia and in Africa. To all those who shall see these presents Greeting!"

"It is notorious to all the world that the late Emperor Charles the Fifth of high and mighty memory, my Lord and Father, who may God absolve, has favourably treated William of Nassau for the succession of the late René of Chalons, Prince of Orange, his cousin. And from his early youth up (while he was still a stranger) he advanced him; which we ourselves have always continued to do and elevated him more and more . . . showering goods and honours on him. . . . Yet every one knows that no sooner had we turned our back on the Country that the said William of Nassau, made Prince of Orange by the means aforesaid, began by his sinister practices and astuteness, to attempt to win the wills of those whom he knew discontented, laden with debts, haters of justice, lovers of novelty, above all those who were suspected of the Religion, caressing them, pleading with them and drawing them to him with fair words and promises."

An immensely long catalogue follows of his misdeeds and those of "Count Louis his brother, a great heretic". William had been chief author of the Request; the image-breaking had gone on with his "advice, knowledge and participation". He had "introduced heretic preachings," persecuted and massacred "good pastors, preachers, religious folk and men of substance"; endeavoured to "exterminate and uproot (if he could) our holy catholic faith, observed from all time by the universal body of christians". With "Cruelty," "importunies and perjuries," "obstinacy and malice," William had pursued his crooked, wicked policy of strife and division; forbearing Philip had after so many years of tumult, offered at Cologne "terms so gracious, just and reasonable that every sensible person must admit them to have been more than sufficient". But William had con-

tinued to push on with his "damnable league" and since it was "notorious that as long as he is in our lands, they will never know peace or rest, basing all on a perpetual diffidence which he has always in his mouth (an ordinary thing with evil men who have the exulcerated consciences of Cain, Judas and their like) . . . for these causes, so just, reasonable and juridical . . . we declare this public plague of the Christian republic to be a traitor and evil man, enemy of us and of the country. And as such we have proscribed and proscribe him perpetually out of our country and all our estates Kingdoms and Seigneuries, forbidding all our subjects of whatever degree or quality, to meet, live, converse speak or communicate with him, openly or secretly, to give him food, drink or fire on pain of our anger." His goods were declared the property of whoso cared to take them "and if there be found any of our subjects or foreigners, so generous of heart and desirous of our service and the public welfare, who will execute our said ordinance and rid us of this pest, delivering him to us alive or dead, or even slaying him: we will give him and his heirs in lands or ready money as he wishes, immediately after the deed, the sum of twenty-five thousand crowns of gold".

William's reply was that last and most memorable of his great manifestoes the "Apologie". In December the Estates of the United Provinces assembled at Delft received a letter from him referring to the Ban with its imputation of "enormous and atrocious crimes" on his part. They hastened to assure him of their confidence, trust and humble intention to aid him as long as he stayed with them. But though, as he said in another letter to them in January, 1581, he had "never replied to the defamatory libels that various calumniators have published" against him, the Ban runs on a different footing, and the issue also of forged letters from him to

Anjou in which he expressed a contempt for religion rendered it necessary for him to clear himself. The Apologie, which ran to over a hundred printed pages, was prepared under William's supervision, but not actually written by him (though passages doubtless were). It was not only presented to the Estates but printed in several languages and circulated broadcast over Europe, a copy being sent to every Sovereign with a covering letter of noble dignity, begging the reader to think if it was possible for him to have committed the horrible deeds attributed to him; to remember how he had been robbed, persecuted, insulted, hounded, deprived of his son and now threatened with murder by the King of Spain; how "nul gentilhomme" could have stood such treatment—for in this letter, on this occasion, to these readers, he insists on the personal and not the political aspect of the quarrel; the rest could be read in the "Apologie". The latter, infinitely too long to cover by quotation, supplies in language sometimes quaintly stilted, but sometimes magnificently protesting and declamatory, both a history of Orange's part in the rebellion and a point by point refutation of Philip's charges. "I will maintain,"—the Nassau motto,—is both preface and appendix to the document which is styled "Apologie or Defence of Monseigneur the Prince of Orange, Count of Nassau, of Catzenellenbogen," etc., etc., "against the Ban and Edict published by the King of Spain by which he proscribes the said seigneur. In which will be revealed the calumnies and false charges contained in the said Proscription."

From such a source such accusations, says William (or his scribe) are "the most excellent chaplet of glory I could have desired before death". But "since there is here not merely a question of attacking me and exposing me to death but also of

overwhelming the Republic and the country's welfare through me: as also it is no longer little defamatory libels composed by men of naught, whose insults I regard no more than the tongue of some little snake which one rather crushes under foot than attacks by arms, but persons of such great quality abase their greatness to abuse me so shamefully; I have deemed it necessary to speak, in order that the common fatherland, for which I am ready to lose my life as I have my goods, shall not be confused by my silence, and in order that the eyes of those who judge the things of this world rather by shadows and appearances than by solid reason shall not be dazzled by these illustrious titles of so many realms and dominions extending even into Africa and Asia . . . and I beg you also to remember, gentlemen, that I am falsely accused of being an ingrate, an atheist, a heretic, a hypocrite, like Judas and Cain, a disturber of the country, a rebel, a foreigner, an enemy of the human race, a public plague of the Christian republic and evildoer; that I am exposed to be killed like a beast, with a pension for all assassins and poisoners who care to do the work". He denies at length that Charles could have done anything but give him the Orange succession. The Emperor was certainly infinitely good to him but he reminds the world that entertaining at Brussels and fighting in the wars he had spent far more for Philip than Philip had for him. He turns on Philip with thunderous blows, as hard as the King's own, accusing him of murdering his son Don Carlos and, in marrying Carlos' betrothed, to be (this is the scribe's phraseology again) "an incestuous king who is only half a degree from a Jupiter husband of Juno his own sister". He traces the growth of rebellion; his horror at Henry's revelations in the Bois de Vincennes, and determination "to drive the vermin of Spaniards from the land"; the Request—not his work—the new bishoprics "so many scaffolds to burn

the poor Christians, privileges trampled under foot and by whom? By a woman emotional yet armed with the mask of the power of a king, with treasons, perjuries and Cardinal tricks. There gentlemen is the anvil on which all the ensuing evil was beaten out."

"As for what they say," he goes on, "of my dead brother Count Louis they would do better to let so good a knight lie in peace, seeing that he was a man better beyond comparison, and a better Christian: and I make no more of their taunts of 'Heretic' than did our Lord Jesus Christ when men much like our enemies called him Samaritan." He recounts the well-known spread of the preachings, which was quite unconnected with anything of his doing, eloquently defends his assumption of arms, proudly triumphs over the vanquishing of general after general by enfranchised Holland and Zeeland. As for the assertion that he had "procured liberty of conscience," he had not if by that was meant "such impieties as ordinarily go on in the house of the Prince of Parma where the atheism and other virtues of Rome are prevalent . . . but I will freely confess that the light of the fires over which they have tortured so many poor Christians has never been agreeable to my eyes as they have rejoiced the sight of the Duke of Alva and the Spaniards, and that I have been of opinion that persecution should cease in the low countries".¹ More, he admitted to having disobeyed the King years ago when he had ordered him to execute religious suspects. Of Egmont and Horn he speaks sorrowfully; of Alva; of Don John ("the sole difference between Don John, the Duke of Alva and Louis de Requesens was that the former was younger and more foolish than the others, and could not so long conceal his

¹ "The poor Moriscoes," he alludes to as examples of Philip's cruelty. These inoffensive Moslems had been hounded out of Spain, and William's tolerant pity for them savours of a later day.

venom and his burning desire to soak his hands in our blood"); of the Pacification of Parma; of his own unwilling election as Ruwart of Brabant; of events since that; of his general attitude towards people and nobles. "If," is his final stirring word to the Estates, "if, Gentlemen, you think that my absence or even my death would serve, I am ready to obey: command, send me to the ends of the earth, I will obey. Here is my head, over which no Prince nor Monarch has power but you; dispose of it for your own good, for the safety and preservation of your Republic. But if you decide that this modest share of experience and industry which is in me and which I have acquired by so long and arduous work, if you think that the remainder of my goods and my life may yet be of use to you (as to you I have dedicated and to the country have consecrated the whole) Resolve upon the points I have put before you. Let us work together . . . and I hope that with your help and God's favour which I have always sought in so many perplexities, what you will resolve will work for the good of you, your wives and your children, all holy and sacred things.

"I WILL MAINTAIN."

It was now *à outrance*; William's friends abroad shook at his terrible boldness, but he collectedly yet desperately set about fortifying his position. In September, 1580, a new treaty with Anjou was made at Plessis-les-Tours. Matthias was left completely out in the cold and next summer the Estates formally abjured Philip as "no prince but a tyrant". This solemn Act of Abjuration, some phrases of which seem to anticipate the eighteenth century theory of the Social Contract between monarch and people, was really the Dutch "Declaration of Independence". It marked an era in Europe's political development; and, instinctively feeling that, the Sovereigns of Europe, predecessors of

a Charles the First and a Louis the Sixteenth, shook their heads over it. The Estates-General (Holland and Zeeland refused to accept Anjou in the Prince's stead and the Walloon Provinces had returned to the old allegiance) agreed to accept William as temporary governor until Anjou should come. Anjou in August forced Parma to raise the siege of Cambrai, but then crossed into England to press his suit with Elizabeth, and there was a check whilst William pleaded with the Estates to wake up, give the Executive Council powers, and realize that the war was then near—for they were very dilatory. St. Aldegonde wrote from England that Anjou had definitely become engaged to the deceptive Queen and the States sent him money and begged him to come over. After irritating delay he sailed at last in February, 1582, with letters of recommendation from Elizabeth, receiving a royal reception all along the route from Flushing to Antwerp where, on the 18th, he was installed in the Dukedom of Brabant, Orange himself girding him with the symbols of power.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BAN AT WORK

EVER since William's first invasion of the Netherlands assassins had hung upon his steps. Alva, Requesens, Parma, each of his great adversaries had sent would-be murderers to compass the death of the man they could never subdue by any other means. Now a couple of English captains had been tempted by the hope of gold; now a Scotchman; now a recreant Netherlander; now a wandering adventurer who had come to Philip's ambassador in London, convinced him of his resolution, and received part of a split coin from him as a token. Every attempt had failed, but the Ban put a new premium on the dastardly act, and all over Western Europe fanatics dreamt of the vast rewards Philip had promised for the performance of one bold deed. A month after Anjou's pompous arrival at Antwerp one of them nearly succeeded.

It was a Sunday in March, 1582, and Anjou's birthday. William had been to church and brought Hohenlo and some French gentlemen home to dine *en famille* with Charlotte and Maurice and the daughters and John's sons, Philip and William. The meal was spun out with talk of the villainies the Spaniards had practised, but at last William rose and led the noblemen out into an ante-room to show them a piece of tapestry. Suddenly a small dark pallid youth stood in front of him holding out a paper. William took it, supposing it a petition. There was a flash and a loud noise. The

Prince stood a moment blinded and puzzled, thinking some part of the house had come down. Then he fell into his friends' arms, streaming with blood. The bullet had gone clean through neck, mouth, and cheek. "Do not kill him—I forgive him my death," he murmured, still master of himself and then, thinking he was a dying man, "What a servant his Highness loses!"

The criminal was felled and killed on the spot by a score of swords. Young Maurice of Nassau showed his mettle by keeping guard over the body and searching it, although there was reason to fear that many of the French around him were traitors. The murderous documents were in the pockets; several thousands crowns in bills, a taper, a "Lamb of God" and two toad-skins—charms. Inquiry soon laid bare the whole plot. The young man was Juan Jaureguy, servant of Anastro, an insolvent Spanish merchant of Antwerp, who, tempted by Philip's offer, had egged the young man on to the murder. Anastro had fled, but two other accomplices, Venero, another servant, and Zimmermann, a monk who had given Jaureguy absolution, were seized. The first horrible suspicions that faithless Anjou may have been implicated were proved false.

William was near death, for the bleeding could not be stopped. Yet his first thought was for Anjou and the cause he must entrust to Anjou. "I beseech you," he wrote painfully to the Duke and to the Estates whom the Duke had summoned, "to have this people commended to you and never to abandon them." Calm and resigned, even when suffering tortures, he retained his equability and his confidence in the Almighty, and cheered his weeping wife and daughter who watched day and night by his bedside. He heard that this Venero and the monk were to be dragged to pieces by horses; he implored the magistrates to spare them, and

when that boon was sternly refused, secured for them an easier death.

“MONSIEUR DE ST. ALDEGONDE,

“I hear that to-morrow they will bring to justice those two prisoners, the accomplices of him who fired the shot at me. For my part, I very freely forgive them the wrong they may have done me. If they have perhaps merited a rigorous punishment, I beseech you to ask the magistrates not to let the men suffer more than is necessary and to content themselves with giving them, if they have deserved it, a speedy death.”

The men were strangled.

We can trace the terrible progress of the Prince's illness in the gloating reports of Philip's ambassador in London to his master. “We may,” writes he when the news first comes (after previously referring to Elizabeth's grief and terror) “give full thanks to God for having been pleased to visit with such a punishment so abominable a heretic and rebel.” Three days later he has heard William's wound had to be cauterized with gold: “The doctors said he could not live beyond dinner-time as he was pulseless and unconscious . . . but God was pleased to delay the end in order to punish him with more terrible sufferings than they say were ever undergone by man”. Later still he learns of the fresh outbreak of hæmorrhage caused by the falling off of the scab on the wound. Binding the vein would have killed the Prince and they are “pressing the vein constantly with the finger, relays of persons being kept in attendance for the purpose”. “This unheard of way,” continues Mendoza, licking his chaps, “retains the blood but his torments are dreadful.” All the vultures in Europe watched the Prince's agony—Mendoza, Parma, Philip, Mary Queen of Scots, Granvelle. The Catholics

in Hainault, now gone clean over to Parma, lit bonfires when they heard of the attack, and news that the Prince still lived was disbelieved by the Spanish party everywhere for weeks. Yet he did live. He wasted away. For days he was unable to speak. He could take in hardly any nourishment. The noise and stench in his room was almost intolerable. "So many people" (writes Fremyn to Walsingham) "went to see him every day, His Highness especially, with such a following, who all entered the room, that it was disgraceful; inasmuch as the breath and the smell of boots and feet, with some people eating onions and the like . . . all this is infinitely harmful to sick or wounded persons." Still uncomplaining and cheerful, perhaps only because he was cheerful, he held on. And six weeks after the attack he was up again and going in thanksgiving to church with Anjou through a rejoicing city.

But three days after that Charlotte of Bourbon died. Her lamentations when he had been shot and she had heard him whisper "Es ist nun mit mir gedan"—"It is all up with me"—had been pitiful; but with her eldest step-daughter, Marie, she had nursed him with marvelous devotion. The strain wore her out. She got fever and, still weak from a recent childbirth, had no strength left for resistance. With her last breath she called upon her Lord "with such fervour as it would be long to tell". Her married life, albeit she had known little of material comfort, had been one of unbroken happiness. She had had a lonely time of it in the cloister and at Heidelberg, and she had found very sweet her full and active years with the man she idolized. So incontrovertible were her virtues that those who had most fiercely opposed the marriage were won by them before the end. At her funeral thousands of grief-stricken burgesses marched and not a few

foreigners to whom she had been (as one of them said) "a kind mother". She left William six little daughters. One of them was sent to Charlotte's grim old father, who had at last relented; the others remained with the Prince, carefully looked after by Marie who stayed with him and gave up her intention of returning to Dillenburg. All these daughters had striking careers and from several of them sprang some of the most famous stocks in Europe.

It was feared by those about him that the bereavement would "work some great melancholy on the Prince," especially as he was still physically drained of strength himself. His affection for Charlotte had been profound and his communion with her most intimate. But his supreme self-reliance had collateral characteristics. He was never unfaithful to friend, man or woman, and every blow Death struck him wounded him sorely; but in his personal as in his political relations he allowed no loss entirely to overwhelm him. He deliberately set his face against weakness under the guise of sentiment; without ever blunting the edge of his sensibilities he never allowed them to master him. Now, as when his brothers were slain, he reeled awhile under the shock, but would not fall; setting his face hard towards the future. Without delay he resumed his barren task of making Anjou palatable to the Netherlanders. He went about with the curled and ugly darling everywhere, dined with him daily, watched his prowess in tilting at the ring. He was not blind to the viciousness and worthlessness of the vain Frenchman. He knew him for what every statesman in Western Europe knew him, an unprincipled debauchee. But, although Parma was steadily gaining ground by money and courtesy and arms in the South, he still cherished his dream of a solidly united Netherlands.

He had started political life with that; he had held it unchanged before him throughout fifteen years of rebellion, when he was alone and friendless in Germany as when he was virtual Dictator in Brussels. It was very hard even now to cast it away for ever, and though to us, looking backwards, William's course may seem a futile one, there yet remained considerations besides his own desires which influenced him to pursue it. Catherine of France was still dallying with the notion of a definite anti-Spain policy; Elizabeth of England was still pretending to regard Anjou as her future husband and pressing his claims upon the Prince. To abandon Anjou meant not merely to acknowledge that general union was impracticable, but to risk the friendship of those two great Powers whose help William had early and late believed and insisted to be indispensable. It was difficult work, but his hand was on the plough. Anjou was already Duke of Brabant. In July he was made Count of Flanders, Lord of Friesland, Duke of Guelderland—none of which Provinces would have looked at him had not their "Father William" forced him upon them. He accompanied Anjou in state to Bruges where the Flemish countship was formally conferred. A plot against the life of both was disclosed, and William was pained to discover that Lamoral Egmont, younger son of his old colleague, was involved in it; he retained his composure and let the wretched young man go.

All this while he was friendless politically. John and the Germans detested the alliance with Anjou. What little diplomatic influence may have been used on his behalf by the Empire had died several years before with Maximilian, who had been succeeded by the bigoted Catholic, Rudolf the Second. Anjou himself was sulky at being nominal chieftain of the confederacy, but

in reality the mere mouthpiece of a shabbily garbed pauper princeling to whom he believed himself superior. The people everywhere murmured, and the independent minded Estates of Holland and Zeeland made it quite plain to their leader that they at least would not accept the oiled Parisian. Again and again the countship of Holland, vacant since the repudiation of Philip, was pressed upon the Prince. He would have refused persistently had he been able to the last to believe that refusal would have meant leaving the door open for Anjou and a United Netherlands; but he knew his Dutchmen and at last accepted, thereby recognizing that however successful Anjou might be in fifteen Provinces he could never rule the whole seventeen. Even then he did not waver in his adherence to the Duke, nor, indeed, when Anjou himself attempted to carry out a most unpardonable plot against him. The Duke, sick of subordination, planned from Antwerp a sudden seizure of Ghent, Bruges, Termonde, Alost, Dunkirk and other strong places by his troops, "for ambition had kindled the fire, vaine glorie blowne the bellowes, and hypocrisie had made way for the flame". William heard rumours of the plan against Antwerp and, perhaps believing Anjou incapable of quite such perfidy, perhaps thinking to shame him into flinging it aside, sent a messenger to him telling him simply what had reached him and assuring him of his trust in him. Heartless and conscienceless, Anjou had the audacity to try his *coup-d'état* even after this. His troupes rushed through the streets crying "*Tuez! tuez! Vive la messe! ville gagnée!*" Fortunately the sturdy citizens turned out and beat them back with tremendous slaughter; but William, arriving in haste from his suburb, only strove to save the survivors from the death they and their master so richly deserved. Anjou "hearing the thun-

dering thumpe of the gunnes of the citie" fled. He retreated to Termonde and coolly wrote to Orange and the Estates—who had obtained certain evidence that the Duke had meant to win untrammelled sovereignty and withdraw his recognition of the Prince's countship over Holland and Zeeland—complaining that he had been treated with insufficient respect but magnanimously promising to overlook it once reparation was made. The indignant Brabanters tried to induce William to take over the Dukedom. He, who spent half his life refusing titles, freely admitted that Anjou's conduct was flagrantly treacherous and that no fealty was morally owing him. Yet, with his old aggravating habit of putting dilemmas to assemblies, he asked whether, if they cast off Anjou, they would trust to their own ability to stem the advance of the fearsome Parma, or whether they would return to the old Spanish allegiance and forfeit their freedom of worship. They reluctantly assented to his logic—for they had no army—and in March, 1583, a new arrangement was patched up with Anjou (now on the French border) under which he was to give up the strongholds he had unwarrantably seized, in return for a subsidy for his regiments. When a States-General, composed of representatives from almost all the rebel Provinces, met at Middelburg and besought the Prince to take over the general government, his response was on the same lines. He was getting old, being now fifty; he had done a life's work; Holland and Zeeland had been his constant associates and he would retain his official connexion with them and them alone; some worthier and more powerful man must be sought to take the helm of the generalty. But all William's indefatigable efforts in this quarter proved in the end to have been thrown away. The despicable son of Catherine de

Medici went back to France whence he actually carried on intrigues with Parma at the same time as the man whom he was so baselessly betraying was being mobbed in Antwerp for his fidelity to him. In the next year he died; his degenerate body had rotted away, and before he passed out of a world he fouled he suffered the intensest anguish.

The rift in the Netherlands widened. The permanent disintegrating factors of race and religion were at work, and a host of more personal and incidental forces reinforced them. On the one hand Parma inch by inch gained ground. The Walloon Provinces, seduced by his appeals to their sectional prejudices, admitted the Spanish troops. Another great blow to the rebel cause came with the treachery of the Prince de Chimay, heir of the Duke of Aerschot. This man was in 1583 elected Governor of Flanders and, with Granvelle's brother Champagny, and Imbize, the erstwhile fiery democrat and extreme Protestant of Ghent, he plotted to deliver the whole Province over to Parma. In its entirety the plan did not succeed; but Bruges and Ypres became royalist whilst many other southern towns were occupied with scant resistance. A gloomy hour for the patriots was that which saw the capture—albeit it was not final—of Zutphen, for that led to the revelation that William's brother-in-law Van der Berg, Governor of Guelderland, had been treacherous. He was captured, released, and with his sons went straightway over to Parma to join the growingly powerful combination of Spanish troops, Catholic nobles, and Walloon Provinces which was cracking and rending the great flimsily-joined structure William had so laboriously built. Meanwhile on the other hand, centripetal forces in the North were becoming more and more noticeable. Holland and Zeeland and Utrecht drew up a new Constitution under which the great powers given to William at

the climacteric of danger were considerably lessened. The Count was to be a very limited ruler, and ultimate power was to reside in the Estates. Holland (1583-4) addressed appeals to the sister States, giving its reasons for making William sovereign and feeling tentatively towards winning for him the constitutional countships and lordships of all the States embraced by the Union of Utrecht. William unselfishly agreed to be the servant of the Provinces on their own terms and with earnest letter and weighty memorandum pressed them to get the work of re-formation through as soon as possible. But they were very deliberate, and when he died not even the last formalities of his accession to the county of Holland—the coronation ceremony, so to speak, had been gone through. The United Netherlands, the great republic that the seventeenth century knew, was a thing of later date. Its father did not live to see its birth.

In April 1583, at Antwerp, a year after the loving Charlotte of Bourbon had died, William the Silent married again. He wanted company, and Charlotte's large young family a mother; for the lively and useful Marie of Nassau must soon be marrying. The bride was Louise de Coligny, daughter of the great Huguenot. William had met her in France in the old days; since Bartholomew night when her husband Téligny and her father were murdered she had been living in widowed retreat. The marriage was a quiet affair, and contemporaries said little about it. Curiously enough this noble woman, who had hidden her talents and aspirations for eleven years, was in second widowhood to have a long, most illustrious career, as the wise, fearless friend and adviser of Holland's rulers; and her own son, Frederick Henry, last of William's children, was to be the sole male of William's line to found a family for the Orange name.

CHAPTER XX

THE END AT DELFT

AFTER the populace of Antwerp had turned against him for clinging to the hated Anjou, William had once more changed his residence, returning to Delft (nine miles from Rotterdam and five south of the Hague), an old walled town full of canals and ancient buildings, the quietest and most delightful in Holland, the very antithesis of roaring Antwerp. His residence, the "Prinsenhof," had been St. Agatha's Convent and fronted on the Oude Delft street, a wide, tree-shaded road with a tranquil canal running through it. The convent—which remains unchanged after three centuries—was an unimposing though picturesque low-storied building of dark red brick, immediately faced across the canal by the tall-towered old church. Its outer wall is right on the street and is pierced by an arched doorway leading into a spacious courtyard; at the back were the stables and beyond them the ramparts of Delft. A lane runs along each side of the house. The main entrance to the house is straight across the courtyard from the street, and out of the passage leading from the doorway are entrances right and left, the latter leading into the big dining-hall,¹ the former into a clean white-washed staircase communicating with the living rooms of the Nassau family. A placid place, in nature alien from strife and bloodshed.

¹ A beautiful high room with tall armorial windows. It is now used as a Nassau museum. One buys portraits of William there.

Here was William in the summer of 1584. He was leading a quieter life than he had for long. The South was palpably reverting to the ancient allegiance; the North was as palpably established in its recusancy. William was busy with correspondence, strengthening the bonds of union within and working hard for renewed help from without—from France especially; but for the while no purpose was to be served by taking the field again or entering upon another pilgrimage of passion through the cities. His daily round was that of the family man and the citizen. Burdened with enormous debts he could not have kept great state had he so desired; but the old extravagant Adam was dead. The tastes of this bald, bearded man of 51, with the seamed face and the eyes worn with perpetual watching, were not those of the Prince of Orange of old time. He was happy in his poverty, rejoicing in the companionship of wife and sister, and sons and daughters, young and old, mixing freely with the bluff burghers, clad as well as he with his plain grey suit, slouch hat, and (for only ornament) Beggars' medal, relic of early struggles. "Le Taciturne" had lost never a whit of his vivacity, his brilliancy of conversation, his spiritual serenity, his fascinating courtesy to high and low. Though still laden with affairs he was freer from one anxiety than he had been for many years. Delft was a small place and the soldiers at her gates were vigilant; here the bullet and the dagger of the assassin should not reach him. In spite of all his illnesses his constitution was unimpaired and his health excellent; there was much good work yet to do and twenty years of active useful life might remain to him. It was ruled otherwise.

Two years had passed since Jaureguy's almost successful attempt upon the Prince's life. In the interval man after man, tempted by Spanish gold, had planned to



THE PRINSENHOF, DELFT

execute the Ban. Salcedo's Bruges plot of 1582 has been referred to. Next year (in an Englishman's choicely venomous language) "another caitive of Caines crew named Peter Dordoigne (Pedro Ordoño) sent from that Romish Babylon and Spanish Periander" had come to Antwerp from Madrid resolved never to leave the town until he had fulfilled his murderous intention. He was taken in time and beheaded. Next year Hans Hanzoon, a Flushing merchant, was instigated by the Spanish ambassador at Paris to blow William up in church; he also was detected and executed. Another abortive plot was made by four renegade Spanish officers who wished to restore themselves to Philip's good books; and yet another by Le Goth, a French officer captured by Parma's general, Roubaix, who secured his release by promising to poison William in a favourite dish of eels, and then straightway revealed the intrigue to Orange and took service with the States. None of these schemes had come near achievement. William was well guarded, especially after the Jaureguy attack, and for success something more was needed than the adventurous boldness of men whose primary motive was money gain or other material reward. To pierce William's faithful human armour complete concentration was needed, intense mental heat joined with consummate coolness of demeanour. An unknown fanatic who had a contempt for life, and to whom ulterior ends were relatively insignificant compared with the immediate one of removing the head of the Protestant Dutch Commonwealth, was the man for the task, and he now came forward.

There arrived at Delft in the first week of May, 1584, a little, lean, dark, wizened man, with sunken cheeks, sharp, fierce, atrabilious features, and a small moustache, who presented himself to Villiers, a local minister. His name, said he, was Francis Guion, born

at Besançon of Protestant parents. Father and mother had been executed and he himself cruelly buffeted for stubborn adherence to the new doctrines. Unable to bear persecutions any longer he had left home and taken service with Mansfeld's secretary (and his own cousin) Dupré. From that service he had fled with impressions of Mansfeld's seals and, having killed at Treves a priest who suspected him of heresy, he had come on to Holland hoping to be of great use to the most excellent Prince of Orange, whom might God preserve. His tales to Villiers and his zealous offers of assistance to William impressed both Prince and chaplain, and the little man was suffered to wander about town and Prinsenhof without hindrance. Nobody took very much notice of him ; he seemed so meek and mean. But his sufferings for the faith won sympathy and his evident devoutness—he was a constant church-goer and was rarely seen without a Bible under his arm—made him an object of admiration and respect.

In reality this François Guion was a young Burgundian Catholic, Balthazar Gérard by name, a descendant through his mother of the old Counts of Holland. Ever since early boyhood he had been consumed by one overmastering ambition—that of killing the arch-heretic and atheist who had perverted the low countries. It is related that when at the age of 20 he heard of the breach William had contrived between Don John and the Estates he had plunged a dagger deep in a door, crying that he would the blow had been struck at the heart of the Prince of Orange. His friends pointing out that Orange might yet reform and become Philip's right-hand man, he had dropped his mission awhile ; but the issue of the Ban fired his fanatical soul again. He was considering ways and means of getting at William when he heard of the attack of the "gentle

Biscayan," Jaureguay; believing like all the world that the Prince was dead he thanked God and felt a load go off his heart. When he learnt that William still lived he resolved immutably to see the thing through. Several accidents delayed him, but at last he got away from Luxembourg with Mansfeld's seals (some of the facts as given to Villiers were partly true) and went to Treves, where he confessed to a saintly Jesuit father who gave him blessing. Thence he went to Tournay where Parma was, and approached him through Assonleville, a Flemish member of the State Council. Contemptuous Parma gave him no very warm reception. He had paid out quite enough money to adventurers who had done nothing, so would not help Gérard even with a few crowns. But he "let him go" and Gérard, after depositing written statements of his intentions with Parma and Assonleville and again confessing, departed with the bare promise that if he succeeded eternal glory and the rewards promised by the King should be his. Parma probably at once forgot all about him.

The meagre body contained an iron spirit. Gérard knew no physical fear, neither did he know timidity in the presence of rank or name. He was insanely proud of his own individuality and courage. The Prince's name had no nerve-shaking glamour for him. He regarded William as a despicable dog of whom it was his duty to rid the world. These feelings bred a confidence, a calmness, a spontaneous histrionic skill that made him walk easily amongst the Delft Calvinists, immune from all suspicion, waiting for his chance.

For a while he found himself baffled, forced to pretend reverence whilst he watched the object of his loathing walk unharmed in and out of his house. He was unable to get a personal interview or a chance of

taking the Prince unawares with his dagger, and as yet he had no money wherewith to buy a pistol. Worse befell him even than this; for, when the Lord of Schoonval was departing on a mission to France, Orange bethought him of Mansfeld's seals which he thought might be of use to the Maréchal de Biron, Governor of Cambray, and ordered that "François Guion" should go with Schoonval and take the seals to Biron personally. Unable to disobey the instruction, eating his heart out with thwarted anger, but still unshakeable in his resolution, Gérard went. Fortune had it that just then Anjou died. "The muthering messenger and cursèd caitiff of Caines, or rather of Tubalcaines crew" seized the occasion and offered to speed back to Delft with this most important news. Arrived, he was admitted to the Prince's bedroom and had the chagrin of seeing William in bed before him, safe because the needful dagger had been forgotten. Still he haunted the town, focussing all his thoughts on the murder. Once more he was instructed to go to France. With a flash of inspiration he said he had no money wherewith to buy decent clothes. William compassionately ordered that he should be provided for, and twelve crowns were given him out of the Prince's scanty purse. With William's own money he purchased a couple of long pistols from one of William's own soldiers.¹

That was on Sunday, 8 July, 1584. On the Tuesday, just after noon, the Prince of Orange, with Louise on his arm and his family and the Burgomaster of Leeuwarden behind, came down the little staircase from his rooms to step across the passage into the airy, big-windowed dining-hall. As he appeared Gérard, pale and quivering a little, stepped forward and asked for a

¹The man killed himself when he learnt what his weapons had done.

passport. William told his secretary to give the man one, and, chatting undisturbed, walked on, the Princess remarking to him the ugly and distorted appearance of the lurking stranger. At dinner they stayed long, William taking earnestly with the Burgomaster about Friesland, and doubtless about the change in the position of affairs which Anjou's death had made. About two o'clock Colonel Morgan, the Englishman who had long fought for the cause, came in, William greeted him, and then intimated to the Leeuwarden man that he desired a further word apart with him and rose from table. He never got beyond the steps just outside the door. Gérard, diabolical triumph at last in his eyes, sprang at him, placed a pistol full against his breast and fired three poisoned bullets into him, one of which went clean through his body against the wall. The screaming women ran out. The Prince had fallen back in the arms of van Maldere, a member of his household, dying and conscious of it. "O God," they heard him murmur, "have pity upon my soul! O God, have pity on this poor people!" White-lipped Catherine his sister asked if he commended himself to Christ. "Yes," he said in German, and never spoke more. As he sank into the swoon of death they carried him back into the dining-room and gently laid him down. There, within a few minutes, William of Orange-Nassau died with wife and sister leaning over him.

Gérard fled through the courtyard and out of the postern door which led to the ramparts and the town moat. He had provided himself with two bladders to help him to swim the ditch and on the other side a caparisoned horse was awaiting him. As he ran he stumbled and lost his second pistol, but he picked himself up and got to the edge of the wall. He was on the point of leaping when a soldier and a groom clutched

him and dragged him back. He showed no sign of repentance, glorying rather that he had done God and King Philip a signal service. Back in the town he calmly wrote a full confession, carefully refraining from implicating Parma. The civic authorities, maddened by their loss, subjected him to diabolical and unmentionable tortures for several days, endeavouring to wring more out of him. Occasionally agony wrenched an additional fact from the puny body; but save at moments Balthazar retained his awful composure, and calmly told his tormentors that he would do the deed again if he had to go three thousand leagues to do it and his victim were compassed about by half a million men. William, who would never have countenanced the barbarities inflicted on his murderer, was beyond knowledge or protest; and when in the end Balthazar was executed it was in the most loathsomely cruel manner. He was charred alive and then practically hacked to pieces. He died with a smile on his face. Catholic Europe regarded him as a martyr, and Parma, Granvelle and Philip rejoiced that the Ban—better late than never—had at last succeeded. “The act merits great praise,” wrote Parma, “and I am inquiring about the relatives of the dead man, whose father and mother are, I am told, still alive, with the intention of praying your majesty to pay them the reward that so generous an enterprise deserves.” Philip, with characteristic parsimony, would not even pay the price of the villainy. Instead of the money promised he bestowed on Gérard’s relatives a patent of nobility and certain lands in Franche Comté belonging to William of Orange himself.

The States-General took over the conduct of affairs. William lay in state until 3 August, and then they buried him in the great church of Delft, a long train of officials, noblemen and burghers following him to the

graveside, and young Maurice being principal mourner. The church, a beautiful high-roofed slender-towered edifice, fills the east side of the open market-place of Delft. The interior, flooded with light from the great clear windows, is white and exquisitely bare save for the dark brown seats and the black marble memorials with their coloured coats of arms. In the middle of the eastern floor stands the magnificent monument the United Provinces in later years erected to the memory of their hero. It is of marble, white and black—a great black sarcophagus, with a white recumbent effigy of the Prince upon it, lies under a canopy supported by ten pillars. At the head of the sarcophagus the Prince stands, armoured in bronze, at its foot is winged Fame and at the corners Liberty, Religion, Courage and Justice. In the vault beneath lie Maurice, Louise de Coligny and the Princes of Orange down to those of our own times.

The blow of his death to the Netherlands was too great to be estimated. The Hollanders scarcely knew where to turn without him; the common people, even in the renegade South, lamented the man who had suffered so many tribulations for his country's sake and at last given his life for her. After he died every year made clearer the wisdom of his aims and the success of his pioneer labours. Prospect of the Union he dreamt of was irretrievably shattered even before he died, and the division between the Protestant and the Spanish Netherlands was made more definite almost immediately with the falling away of Flanders, Brabant and Antwerp. Even had William lived he could have done no more than postpone this inevitable thing. But his real creation, the United North, was firmly established, and the Dutch Republic, the Dutch kingdom of to-day, looks back to him as its sole Father and Founder. Under his noble widow and his gallant sons those seven Provinces that

he soldered together carried on the struggle with Spain, even now on the verge of her decadence, and carried it on triumphantly. Long before a century had passed Holland was a great world Power and to-day, with a descendant of William's on the throne, though it has lost its fighting strength its commercial and artistic glories are with it still. And descendants of the outlaw, through one or other of his eight married daughters, reign over nearly every Kingdom in Europe.

The sun of the Prince's own personality shines ever brighter as time goes on. Whilst he lived William's very unassuming geniality, friendliness, contempt for political and social cosmetics, helped to prevent even those closest to him from realizing how strong and wise a leader of men was in their midst. In long perspective his heroic stature is clearly seen. He had almost all the qualities of a great ruler—breadth of mind, lack of prejudice, far-sightedness, tact, firmness of purpose, knowledge of human nature. But the greatest of his qualities was his courage, moral and physical. Some said he was no soldier. Certainly a battle-field was not his natural environment. A man who loathed war might well feel out of his element in the fighting line, even when his own sense had resolved that fighting was necessary. But no specific act of cowardice can be urged against him ; merely acts of caution such as stand to the credit or discredit of the greatest generals of his time. In the various military dispositions he made the hand of incompetence cannot be detected ; whether it be his invasions or his relief schemes for the besieged cities no blunder can be laid at his door. True his military plans rarely had much success—save only that for the relief of Leyden—but how could it have been otherwise ? He never knew what it was to command a dependable and well-organized army ; whoever won victories against

veterans under a genius when commanding starving mutineers? Neither a born soldier nor an incapable one was William ; that he lacked the moral qualities needed, is an untenable theory. His whole career spells undaunted valour, not intermittent but constant. Assassins dogged him, he cared not ; adversity rained its blows upon him, he shrank not. What more splendid eulogy than that unwilling tribute of his Catholic foe, Renon de France, whose spleen elsewhere vents itself in the usual accusations of cowardice : “ Which Prince had besides this maxim : that one must never lose courage even in the midst of the greatest disasters and difficulties, but hold out and hope ; affirming that these two courses had preserved him amid an infinity of adversities and that the circumstances against which we are struggling should never bring us into such despair that we deem them to be without remedy”. “ Saevis tranquillus in undis ” was his personal motto, and “ Je maintiendrai ” that of his house.

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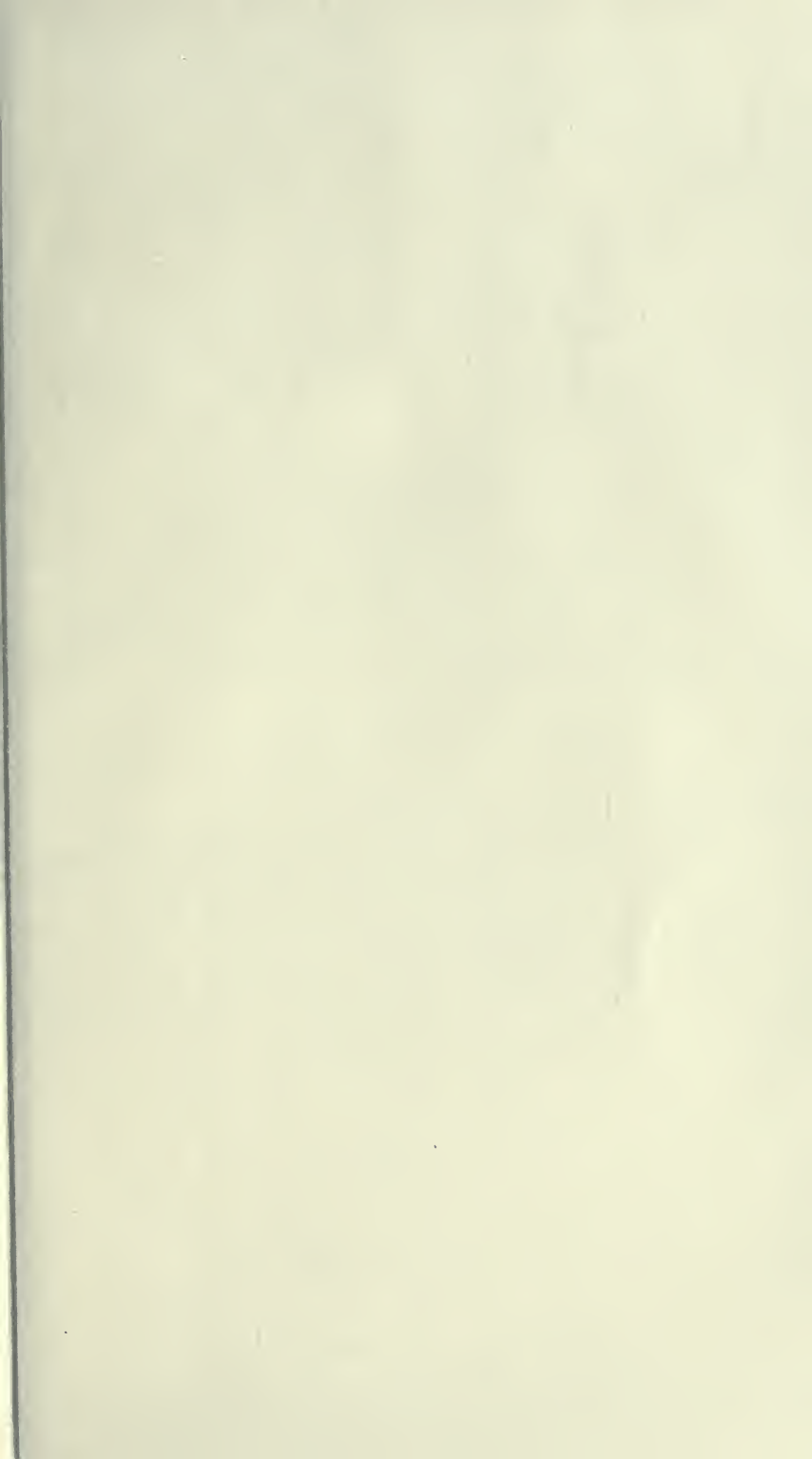
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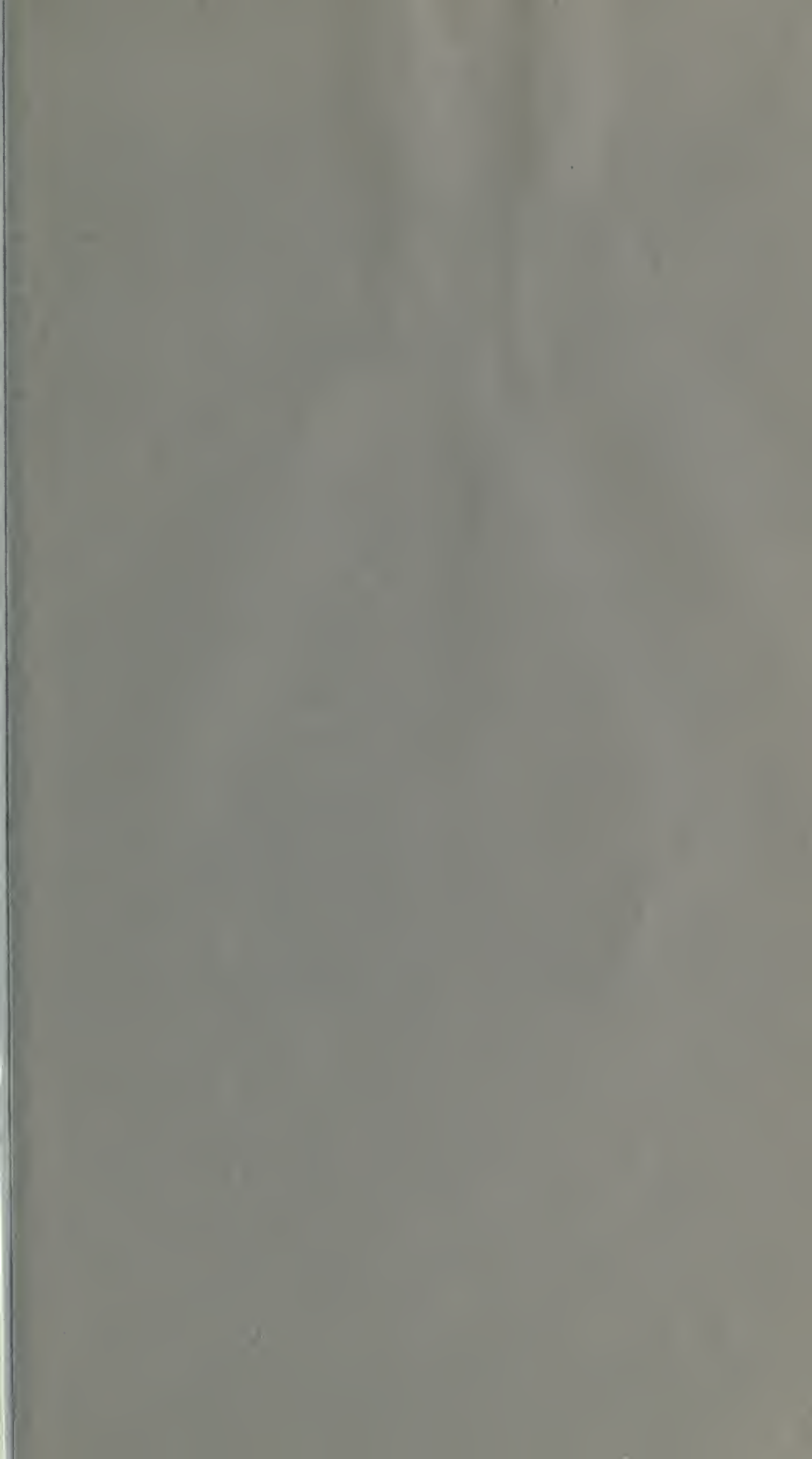
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