

## CHAPTER VI

### ALVA

[1567-1573 A.D.]

The revolt of the Netherlands against Spain, in 1568, changed the political aspect of the greater part of the world. It is because of this revolt, and the war of eighty years following, that the people of the United States are not a Spanish-speaking nation, but are, instead, an English-speaking one.

Had the reigning family and the authorities of Spain exercised wise forethought in their dealings with the Netherland people, Spanish domination — assisted by Dutch co-operation under Spanish supremacy — would have rendered the whole of this territory Spanish many years before the English would have become strong enough to attempt the conquest and the independent settling of any part of the American continent. — VERSTEEG.<sup>b</sup>

It was determined at last that the Netherland heresy should be conquered by force of arms. The invasion resembled both a crusade against the infidel and a treasure-hunting foray into the auriferous Indies, achievements by which Spanish chivalry had so often illustrated itself. The banner of the cross was to be replanted upon the conquered battlements of three hundred infidel cities, and a torrent of wealth, richer than ever flowed from Mexican or Peruvian mines, was to flow into the royal treasury from the perennial fountains of confiscation. Who so fit to be the Tancred and the Pizarro of this bicoloured expedition as the duke of Alva, the man who had been devoted from his earliest childhood, and from his father's grave, to hostility against unbelievers, and who had prophesied that treasure would flow in a stream, a yard deep, from the Netherlands so soon as the heretics began to meet with their deserts?

Fernando Alvarez de Toledo, duke of Alva,<sup>1</sup> was now in his sixtieth year. He was the most successful and experienced general of Spain, or of Europe. In the only honourable profession of the age, he was the most thorough and the most pedantic professor. Since the days of Demetrius Poliorcetes, no man had besieged so many cities. Since the days of Fabius Cunctator, no

[<sup>1</sup> The name is also spelled Alba, the Spanish pronunciation still retaining Alva.]

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general had avoided so many battles, and no soldier, courageous as he was, ever attained to a more sublime indifference to calumny or depreciation.

He was born in 1508, of a family which boasted imperial descent. A Palæologus, brother of a Byzantine emperor, had conquered the city of Toledo, and transmitted its appellation as a family name. The father of Fernando, Don Garcia, had been slain on the isle of Gerbes, in battle with the Moors, when his son was but four years of age. The child was brought up by his grandfather, Don Frederick, and trained from his tenderest infancy to arms. His maiden sword was fleshed at Fuenterrabia, where, although but sixteen years of age, he was considered to have contributed in no small degree to the success of the Spanish arms. In 1530 he accompanied the emperor in his campaign against the Turk. His mad ride from Hungary to Spain and back again, accomplished in seventeen days for the sake of a brief visit to his newly married wife, is not the least attractive episode in the history of an existence which was destined to be so dark and sanguinary. In 1546 and 1547 he was generalissimo in the war against the Smalkaldian League.

Having accompanied Philip to England in 1554, on his matrimonial expedition, he was destined in the following years, as viceroy and generalissimo of Italy, to be placed in a series of false positions. A great captain engaged in a little war, the champion of the cross in arms against the successor of St. Peter, he had extricated himself, at last, with his usual adroitness, but with very little glory. While he had been paltering with a dotard, whom he was forbidden to crush, Egmont had struck down the chosen troops of France, and conquered her most illustrious commanders. Here was the unpardonable crime which could only be expiated by the blood of the victor. Unfortunately for his rival, the time was now approaching when the long-deferred revenge was to be satisfied.

On the whole, the duke of Alva was inferior to no general of his age. As a disciplinarian he was foremost in Spain, perhaps in Europe. As a statesman, he had neither experience nor talent. As a man, his character was simple. He did not combine a great variety of vices, but those which he had were colossal, and he possessed no virtues. He was neither lustful nor intemperate, but his professed eulogists admitted his enormous avarice, while the world has agreed that such an amount of stealth and ferocity, of patient vindictiveness and universal bloodthirstiness, were never found in a savage beast of the forest, and but rarely in a human bosom. As difficult of access as Philip himself, he was even more haughty to those who were admitted to his presence. He addressed everyone with the depreciating second person plural. Possessing the right of being covered in the presence of the Spanish monarch, he had been with difficulty brought to renounce it before the German emperor.

In person he was tall, thin, erect, with a small head, a long visage, lean yellow cheeks, dark twinkling eyes, a dust complexion, black bristling hair, and a long sable-silvered beard, descending in two waving streams upon his breast.

Such being the design, the machinery was well selected. The best man in Europe to lead the invading force was placed at the head of ten thousand picked veterans. The privates in this exquisite little army, said the enthusiastic connoisseur Brantôme,<sup>c</sup> who travelled post into Lorraine, expressly to see them on their march, all wore engraved or gilded armour, and were in every respect equipped like captains. They were the first who carried muskets, a weapon which very much astonished the Flemings when it first

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rattled in their ears. The musketeers, he observed, might have been mistaken for princes, with such agreeable and graceful arrogance did they present themselves. Each was attended by his servant or esquire, who carried his piece for him, except in battle, and all were treated with extreme deference by the rest of the army, as if they had been officers. The cavalry, amounting to about twelve hundred, was under the command of the natural son of the duke, Don Fernando de Toledo, prior of the knights of St. John.

With an army thus perfect, on a small scale, in all its departments — and furnished, in addition, with a force of two thousand prostitutes, as regularly enrolled, disciplined, and distributed as the cavalry or the artillery — the duke embarked upon his momentous enterprise.

The duchess had in her secret letters to Philip continued to express her disapprobation of the enterprise thus committed to Alva. She had bitterly complained that now, when the country had been pacified by her efforts, another should be sent to reap all the glory, or perhaps to undo all that she had so painfully and so successfully done. She stated to her brother, in most unequivocal language, that the name of Alva was odious enough to make the whole Spanish nation detested in the Netherlands. She also wrote personally to Alva, imploring, commanding,

and threatening, but with equally ill success. As to the effects of his armed invasion upon the temper of the provinces, he was supremely indifferent. He came as a conqueror, not as a mediator. "I have tamed people of iron in my day," said he contemptuously; "shall I not easily crush these men of butter?"



THE DUKE OF ALVA  
(1508-1582)

#### THE ARRIVAL OF ALVA (1567)

At Thionville he was officially waited upon by Barlaymont and Noircarmes, on the part of the regent. He at this point, moreover, began to receive deputations from various cities, bidding him a hollow and trembling welcome, and deprecating his displeasure for anything in the past which might seem offensive. To all such embassies he replied in vague and conventional language; saying, however, to his confidential attendants: "I am here: so

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much is certain; whether I am welcome or not is to me a matter of little consequence."

At Tirlemont, on the 22nd of August, he was met by Count Egmont, who had ridden forth from Brussels to show him a becoming respect, as the representative of his sovereign. The count was accompanied by several other noblemen, and brought to the duke a present of several beautiful horses. Alva received him, however, but coldly, for he was unable at first to adjust the mask to his countenance as adroitly as was necessary. "Behold the greatest of all the heretics," he observed to his attendants, as soon as the nobleman's presence was announced, and in a voice loud enough for him to hear. After a brief interval, however, Alva seems to have commanded himself. He passed his arm lovingly over that stately neck which he had already devoted to the block, and the two rode along side by side in friendly conversation; Alva, still attended by Egmont, rode soon afterwards through the Louvain gate into Brussels.

The day of doom for all the crimes which had ever been committed in the course of ages seemed now to have dawned upon the Netherlands. The sword which had so long been hanging over them seemed about to descend. Throughout the provinces there was but one feeling — cold and hopeless dismay. Those who still saw a possibility of effecting their escape from the fated land swarmed across the frontier. All foreign merchants deserted the great marts. The cities became as still as if the plague-banner had been unfurled on every house-top. Meantime the captain-general proceeded methodically with his work. He distributed his troops through Brussels, Ghent, Antwerp, and other principal cities. As a measure of necessity and mark of the last humiliation, he required the municipalities to transfer their keys to his keeping.

In order that Egmont, Horn, and other distinguished victims might not take alarm, and thus escape the doom deliberately arranged for them, royal assurances were despatched to the Netherlands, cheering their despondency and dispelling their doubts. With his own hand Philip wrote a letter, full of affection and confidence, to Egmont. He wrote it after Alva had left Madrid upon his mission of vengeance. The same stealthy measures were pursued with regard to others. The prince of Orange was not likely to be lured into the royal trap, however cautiously baited. Unfortunately he could not communicate his wisdom to his friends.

It is difficult to comprehend so very sanguine a temperament as that to which Egmont owed his destruction. — It was not the prince of Orange alone who had prophesied his doom. — Warnings had come to the count from every quarter, and they were now frequently repeated. Certainly he was not without anxiety, but he had made his decision — determined to believe in the royal word and in the royal gratitude for his services rendered.

The duke manifested the most friendly dispositions, taking care to send him large presents of Spanish and Italian fruits, received frequently by the government couriers. Lapped in this fatal security, Egmont not only forgot his fears, but unfortunately succeeded in inspiring Count Horn with a portion of his confidence. The admiral left his retirement at Weert to fall into the pit which his enemies had been so skilfully preparing at Brussels. September 9th, the grand prior, Don Fernando, gave a magnificent dinner, to which Egmont and Horn, together with Noircarnes, the viscount of Ghent, and many other noblemen were invited.

At four o'clock, the dinner being finished, Horn and Egmont, accompanied by the other gentlemen, proceeded to the "Jassy" house, then occupied

by Alva, to take part in the deliberations proposed. They were received by the duke with great courtesy. The council lasted till near seven in the evening. As it broke up, Don Sancho de Avila, captain of the duke's guard, requested Egmont to remain for a moment after the rest. After an insignificant remark or two, the Spanish officer, as soon as the two were alone, requested Egmont to surrender his sword. At the same moment the doors of the adjacent apartment were opened, and Egmont saw himself surrounded by a company of Spanish musqueteers and halberdmen. Finding himself thus entrapped, he gave up his sword, saying bitterly, as he did so, that it had at least rendered some service to the king in times which were past. Count Horn was arrested upon the same occasion. Upon the 23rd of September both were removed under a strong guard to the castle of Ghent. The consternation was universal throughout the provinces when the arrests became known.

The unfortunate envoys, the marquis of Bergen and the baron of Montigny, had remained in Spain under close observation. Of those doomed victims who, in spite of friendly remonstrances and of ominous warnings, had thus ventured into the lion's den, no retreating footmarks were ever to be seen. Their fate, now that Alva had at last been despatched to the Netherlands, seemed to be sealed, and the marquis of Bergen, accepting the augury in its most evil sense, immediately afterwards had sickened unto death. Before his limbs were cold, a messenger was on his way to Brussels, instructing the regent to sequester his property, and to arrest, upon suspicion of heresy, the youthful kinsman and niece, who, by the will of the marquis, were to be united in marriage and to share his estate. The baron of Montigny was closely confined in the alcazar of Segovia, never to leave a Spanish prison alive.

#### THE BLOODY "COUNCIL OF TROUBLES"

In the same despatch of the 9th of September, in which the duke communicated to Philip the capture of Egmont and Horn, he announced to him his determination to establish a new court for the trial of crimes committed during the recent period of troubles. This wonderful tribunal was accordingly created with the least possible delay. It was called the council of Troubles, but it soon acquired the terrible name, by which it will be forever known in history, of the Blood Council. It superseded all other institutions. Every court, from those of the municipal magistracies up to the supreme councils of the provinces, were forbidden to take cognisance in future of any cause growing out of the late troubles. Not only citizens of every province, but the municipal bodies and even the sovereign provincial estates themselves, were compelled to plead, like humble individuals, before this new and extraordinary tribunal.

It is unnecessary to allude to the absolute violation which was thus committed of all charters, laws, and privileges, because the very creation of the council was a bold and brutal proclamation that those laws and privileges were at an end. The constitution or maternal principle of this suddenly erected court was of a twofold nature. It defined and it punished the crime of treason. The definitions, couched in eighteen articles, declared it to be treason to have delivered or signed any petition against the new bishops, the Inquisition, or the edicts; to have tolerated public preaching under any circumstances; to have omitted resistance to the image-breaking, to the field-preaching, or to the presentation of the Request by the nobles, and "either through sympathy or surprise" to have asserted that the king did

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not possess the right to deprive all the provinces of their liberties, or to have maintained that this present tribunal was bound to respect in any manner any laws or any charters. In these brief and simple but comprehensive terms was the crime of high treason defined. The punishment was still more briefly, simply, and comprehensively stated, for it was instant death in all cases. So well, too, did this new and terrible engine perform its work that, in less than three months from the time of its erection, eighteen hundred human beings had suffered death by its summary proceedings; some of the highest, the noblest, and the most virtuous in the land among the number. Yet, strange to say, this tremendous court, thus established upon the ruins of all the ancient institutions of the country, had not been provided with even a nominal authority from any source whatever. The Blood Council was merely an informal club, of which the duke was perpetual president, while the other members were all appointed by himself.

No one who was offered the office refused it. Noircarmes and Barlaymont accepted with very great eagerness. Several presidents and councillors of the different provincial tribunals were appointed, but all the Netherlanders were men of straw. Two Spaniards, Del Rio and Vargas, were the only members who could vote; while their decisions were subject to reversal by Alva. Del Rio was a man without character or talent, a mere tool in the hands of his superiors, but Juan de Vargas was a terrible reality.

No better man could have been found in Europe for the post to which he was thus elevated. To shed human blood was, in his opinion, the only important business and the only exhilarating pastime of life. His youth had been stained with other crimes. He had been obliged to retire from Spain, because of his violation of an orphan child to whom he was guardian; but, in his manhood, he found no pleasure but in murder. He executed Alva's bloody work with an industry which was almost superhuman, and with a merriment which would have shamed a demon. His execrable jests ring through the blood and smoke and death-cries of those days of perpetual sacrifice. The figure of Vargas rises upon us through the mist of three centuries with terrible distinctness. Even his barbarous grammar has not been forgotten, and his crimes against syntax and against humanity have acquired the same immortality.

Among the ciphers who composed the rest of the board was the Flemish councillor Hessels. Hessels was accustomed to doze away his afternoon hours at the council table, and when awakened from his nap in order that he might express an opinion on the case then before the court, was wont to rub his eyes and to call out "*Ad patibulum, ad patibulum!*" ("to the gallows with him, to the gallows with him!") with great fervour, but in entire ignorance of the culprit's name or the merits of the case. His wife, naturally disturbed that her husband's waking and sleeping hours were alike absorbed with this hangman's work, more than once ominously expressed her hope to him that he, whose head and heart were thus engrossed with the gibbet, might not one day come to hang upon it himself; a gloomy prophecy which the future most terribly fulfilled.

The council of Blood, thus constituted, held its first session on the 20th of September, 1567, at the lodgings of Alva. There was a rude organisation by which a crowd of commissioners, acting as inferior officers of the council, were spread over the provinces, whose business was to collect information concerning all persons who might be incriminated for participation in the recent troubles. The greatest crime, however, was to be rich, and one which could be expiated by no virtues, however signal. Alva was bent upon

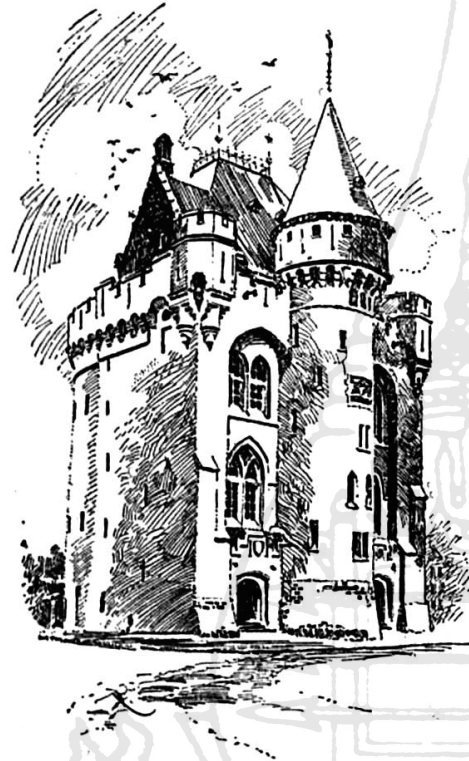
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proving himself as accomplished a financier as he was indisputably a consummate commander, and he had promised his master an annual income of 500,000 ducats from the confiscations which were to accompany the executions.

It was necessary that the blood torrent should flow at once through the Netherlands, in order that the promised golden river, a yard deep, according to his vaunt, should begin to irrigate the thirsty soil of Spain. It is obvious, from the fundamental laws which were made to define treason at the same moment in which they established the council, that any man might be at

any instant summoned to the court. Every man, whether innocent or guilty, whether papist or Protestant, felt his head shaking on his shoulders. If he were wealthy, there seemed no remedy but flight, which was now almost impossible, from the heavy penalties affixed by the new edict upon all carriers, shipmasters, and wagoners, who should aid in the escape of heretics.

The register of every city, village, and hamlet throughout the Netherlands showed the daily lists of men, women, and children thus sacrificed at the shrine of the demon who had obtained the mastery over this unhappy land. It was not often that an individual was of sufficient importance to be tried — if trial it could be called — by himself. It was found more expeditious to send them in batches to the furnace. Thus, for example, on the 4th of January, eighty-four inhabitants of Valenciennes were condemned; on another day, ninety-five miscellaneous individuals from different places in Flanders; on another, forty-six inhabitants of Mechlin; on another, thirty-five persons, from different localities; and so on.



PORTE DE HAL, BRUSSELS, ERECTED 1381. USED BY ALVA AS A BASTILLE (1568-1573)

The sentences were occasionally in advance of the docket. Thus upon one occasion a man's case was called for trial, but before the investigation was commenced it was discovered that he had been already executed. A cursory examination of the papers proved, moreover, as usual, that the culprit had committed no crime. "No matter for that," said Vargas, jocosely; "if he has died innocent, it will be all the better for him when he takes his trial in the other world."

But however the councillors might indulge in these gentle jests among themselves, it was obvious that innocence was in reality impossible, according to the rules which had been laid down regarding treason. The practice was in accordance with the precept, and persons were daily executed with senseless pretenses, which was worse than executions with no pretenses at all. Thus Peter de Witt of Amsterdam was beheaded, because at one of the

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tumults in that city he had persuaded a rioter not to fire upon a magistrate. This was taken as sufficient proof that he was a man in authority among the rebels, and he was accordingly put to death. Madame Juriaen, who, in 1566, had struck with her slipper a little wooden image of the Virgin, together with her maid-servant, who had witnessed without denouncing the crime, were both drowned by the hangman in a hogshead placed on the scaffold. Death, even, did not in all cases place a criminal beyond the reach of the executioner. Egbert Meynartsoon, a man of high official rank, had been condemned, together with two colleagues, on an accusation of collecting money in a Lutheran church. He died in prison of dropsy. The sheriff consoled himself by placing the body on a chair, and having the dead man beheaded in company with his colleagues.

Thus the whole country became a charnel-house; the death-bell tolled hourly in every village; not a family but was called to mourn for its dearest relatives, while the survivors stalked listlessly about, the ghosts of their former selves, among the wrecks of their former homes. The spirit of the nation, within a few months after the arrival of Alva, seemed hopelessly broken.

## DEPARTURE OF THE REGENT (DECEMBER, 1567)

The duchess of Parma had been kept in a continued state of irritation. She had not ceased for many months to demand her release from the odious position of a cipher in a land where she had so lately been sovereign, and she had at last obtained it. Philip transmitted his acceptance of her resignation by the same courier who brought Alva's commission to be governor-general in her place. The letters to the duchess were full of conventional compliments for her past services, accompanied, however, with a less barren and more acceptable acknowledgment, in the shape of a life income of 14,000 ducats instead of the eight thousand hitherto enjoyed by her highness.

The horrors of the succeeding administration proved beneficial to her reputation. Upon the dark ground of succeeding years the lines which recorded her history seemed written with letters of light. Yet her conduct in the Netherlands offers but few points for approbation, and many for indignant censure. That she was not entirely destitute of feminine softness and sentiments of bounty, her parting despatch to her brother proved. In that letter she recommended to him a course of clemency and forgiveness, and reminded him that the nearer kings approached to God in station, the more they should endeavour to imitate him in his attributes of benignity. But the language of this farewell was more tender than had been the spirit of her government. One looks in vain, too, through the general atmosphere of kindness which pervades the epistle, for a special recommendation of those distinguished and doomed seigniors, whose attachment to her person and whose chivalrous and conscientious endeavours to fulfil her own orders had placed them upon the edge of that precipice from which they were shortly to be hurled.

Meantime the second civil war in France had broken out. The hollow truce by which the Guise party and the Huguenots had partly pretended to deceive each other was hastened to its end, among other causes, by the march of Alva to the Netherlands. The Huguenots had taken alarm, for they recognised the fellowship which united their foes in all countries against the Reformation, and Condé and Coligny knew too well that the same influence which had brought Alva to Brussels would soon create an exterminating



army against their followers. Hostilities were resumed with more bitterness than ever. The duke of Alva not only furnished Catherine de' Medici with advice, but with two thousand foot and fifteen hundred horse, under the count of Arenberg, attended by a choice band of the Catholic nobility of the Netherlands.

Alva was not meantime unmindful of the business which had served as a pretext in the arrest of the two counts. The fortifications of the principal cities were pushed on with great rapidity. The memorable citadel of Antwerp in particular had already been commenced in October under the superintendence of the celebrated engineers, Pacheco and Gabriel de Cerbelloni. In a few months it was completed, at a cost of 1,400,000 florins, of which sum the citizens, in spite of their remonstrances, were compelled to contribute more than one quarter. To four of the five bastions, the captain-general, with characteristic ostentation, gave his own names and titles. One was called the Duke, the second Ferdinando, a third Toledo, a fourth Alva, while the fifth was baptised with the name of the ill-fated engineer, Pacheco.

On the 19th of January, 1568, the prince of Orange, his brother Louis of Nassau, his brother-in-law Count van den Berg, the count Hoogstraten, the count Kuilenburg, and the baron of Montigny were summoned in the name of Alva to appear before the Blood Council, within thrice fourteen days from the date of the proclamation, under pain of perpetual banishment with confiscation of their estates. It is needless to say that these seigniors did not obey the summons. They knew full well that their obedience would be rewarded only with death. The prince replied to this summons by a brief and somewhat contemptuous plea to the jurisdiction. As a knight of the Fleece, as a member of the German Empire, as a sovereign prince in France, as a citizen of the Netherlands, he rejected the authority of Alva and of his self-constituted tribunal. His innocence he was willing to establish before competent courts and righteous judges.

From the general tenor of the document, it is obvious both that the prince was not yet ready to throw down the gauntlet to his sovereign, nor to proclaim his adhesion to the new religion. On departing from the Netherlands in the spring, he had said openly that he was still in possession of sixty thousand florins yearly, and that he should commence no hostilities against Philip, so long as he did not disturb him in his honour or his estates.

His character had, however, already been attacked, his property threatened with confiscation. His closest ties of family were now to be severed by the hand of the tyrant. His eldest child, the count of Buren, torn from his protection, was to be carried into indefinite captivity in a foreign land. It was a remarkable oversight, for a person of his sagacity, that, upon his own departure from the provinces, he should leave his son, then a boy of thirteen years, to pursue his studies at the college of Louvain. Thus exposed to the power of the government, he was soon seized as a hostage for the good behaviour of the father. A changeling, as it were, from his cradle, he seemed completely transformed by his Spanish tuition, for he was educated and not sacrificed by Philip. When he returned to the Netherlands, after a twenty years' residence in Spain, it was difficult to detect in his gloomy brow, saturnine character, and Jesuitical habits a trace of the generous spirit which characterised that race of heroes of Orange-Nassau.

Events now marched with rapidity. Early in the year, the most sublime sentence of death was promulgated which has ever been pronounced since the creation of the world. The Roman tyrant wished that his enemies' heads were all upon a single neck, that he might strike them off at a blow;

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the Inquisition assisted Philip to place the heads of all his Netherland subjects upon a single neck for the same fell purpose. Upon the 16th of February, 1568, a sentence of the holy office condemned all the inhabitants of the Netherlands to death as heretics. From this universal doom only a few persons, especially named, were excepted. A proclamation of the king, dated ten days later, confirmed this decree of the Inquisition, and ordered it to be carried into instant execution, without regard to age, sex, or condition.

This is probably the most concise death-warrant that was ever framed. Three millions of people, men, women, and children, were sentenced to the scaffold in three lines; and, as it was well known that these were not harmless thunders, like some bulls of the Vatican, but serious and practical measures, which were to be enforced, the horror which they produced may be easily imagined. It was hardly the purpose of government to compel the absolute completion of the wholesale plan in all its length and breadth; yet, in the horrible times upon which they had fallen, the Netherlanders might be excused for believing that no measure was too monstrous to be fulfilled. At any rate, it was certain that when all were condemned, any might at a moment's warning be carried to the scaffold, and this was precisely the course adopted by the authorities.

Men in the highest and humblest positions were daily and hourly dragged to the stake. Alva, in a single letter to Philip, coolly estimated the number of executions which were to take place immediately after the expiration of holy week "at eight hundred heads." Many a citizen, convicted of a hundred thousand florins and of no other crime, saw himself suddenly tied to a horse's tail with his hands fastened behind him, and so dragged to the gallows. But although wealth was an unpardonable sin, poverty proved rarely a protection. Reasons sufficient could always be found for dooming the starveling labourer as well as the opulent burgher. To avoid the disturbances created in the streets by the frequent harangues or exhortations addressed to the bystanders by the victims on their way to the scaffold, a new gag was invented. The tongue of each prisoner was screwed into an iron ring, and then seared with a hot iron. The swelling and inflammation which were the immediate result, prevented the tongue from slipping through the ring, and of course effectually precluded all possibility of speech.<sup>d</sup>

#### TRIAL AND FATE OF EGMONT AND HORN (1568)

The two counts had been confined in the citadel of Ghent for more than eight months. Their trial commenced in due form before the council of Twelve. The indictment against Egmont consisted of ninety counts, and that against Horn of sixty. Every action, however innocent, every omission of duty, was interpreted on the principle, which had been laid down in the opening of the indictment, that the two counts, in conjunction with the prince of Orange, had planned the overthrow of the royal authority in the Netherlands, and the usurpation of the government of the country; the expulsion of Granvella, the embassy of Egmont to Madrid, the confederacy of the gueux, the concessions which they made to the Protestants in the provinces under their government — all were made to have a connection with, and a reference to, this deliberate design. The accusations were sent to each of the prisoners, who were required to reply to them within five days.

The first step was to demur against the tribunal which was to try them, since, by the privilege of their order, they, as knights of the Golden Fleece, were amenable only to the king himself, the grand master. But this

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demurrer was overruled, and they were required to produce their witnesses, in default of which they were to be proceeded against *in contumaciam*. Egmont had satisfactorily answered to eighty-two counts, while Count Horn had refused the charges against him, article by article. The accusation and the defence are still extant; on that defence every impartial tribunal would have acquitted them both.

Egmont's wife, by birth a duchess of Bavaria, succeeded in obtaining the intercessions of almost every German court in behalf of her husband. Alva rejected them, with a declaration that they had no force in such a case as the present. On the 1st of June, 1568, the council of Twelve declared them guilty, and on the 4th of that month sentence of death was pronounced against them.

The execution of twenty-five noble Netherlanders, who were beheaded in three successive days, in the market-place at Brussels, was the terrible prelude.

The duke had reason to hasten the execution of the sentence. Count Louis of Nassau had given battle to the count of Arenberg, near the monastery of Heiligerlee in Groningen, and had the good fortune to defeat him. Immediately after his victory, he had advanced against Groningen, and laid siege to it. The success of his arms had raised the courage of his faction, and the prince of Orange, his brother, was close at hand with an army to support him.

On the day after the sentence was passed, the two counts were brought, under an escort of three thousand Spaniards, from Ghent to Brussels. During the night between the 4th and 5th of June the sentences were brought to the prisoners, after they had already gone to rest. Egmont called for pen and ink, and wrote two letters, one to his wife, the other to the king; the latter was as follows:

SIRE : I have learned, this evening, the sentence which your majesty has been pleased to pronounce upon me. Although I have never had a thought, and believe myself never to have done a deed which could tend to the prejudice of your majesty's person or service, or to the detriment of our true ancient and Catholic religion, nevertheless I take patience to bear that which it has pleased the good God to send. If, during these troubles in the Netherlands, I have done or permitted aught which had a different appearance, it has been with the true and good intent to serve God and your majesty, and the necessity of the times. Therefore, I pray your majesty to forgive me, and to have compassion on my poor wife, my children, and my servants; having regard to my past services. In which hope I now commend myself to the mercy of God.

From Brussels,

Ready to die, this 5th June, 1568.

Your majesty's very humble and loyal vassal and servant,

LAMORAL D'EGMONT.

The family of the count was subsequently reinstated in all his property, fiefs, and rights, which, by virtue of the sentence, had escheated to the royal treasury.

Egmont paced the scaffold with noble dignity, and lamented that it had not been permitted him to die a more honourable death for his king and his country. Up to the last he seemed unable to persuade himself that the king was in earnest, and that his severity would be carried any further than the mere terror of execution. He then clenched his teeth, threw off his mantle and robe, knelt upon the cushion and prepared himself for the last prayer. He drew a silk cap over his eyes, and awaited the stroke. Over the corpse and the streaming blood a black cloth was immediately thrown.

All Brussels thronged around the scaffold, and the fatal blow seemed to fall on every heart. Loud sobs alone broke the appalling silence. The

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duke himself, who watched the execution from a window of the town-house, wiped his eyes as his victim died.<sup>4</sup>

Shortly afterwards, Count Horn advanced on the scaffold. Of a more violent temperament than his friend, he burst forth in bitter reproaches against the king, and the bishop with difficulty prevailed upon him to make a better use of his last moments than to abuse them in imprecations on his enemies. At last, however, he became more collected, and made his confession to the bishop, which at first he was disposed to refuse. He mounted the scaffold with the same attendants as his friend. In passing, he saluted many of his acquaintances; his hands were, like Egmont's, free. When he had ascended, he cast his eyes upon the corpse which lay under the cloth, and asked one of the by-standers if it was the body of his friend. On being answered in the affirmative, he said some words in Spanish, threw his cloak from him, and knelt upon the cushion. All shrieked aloud as he received the fatal blow.

The heads of both were fixed upon poles which were set upon the scaffold, where they remained until past three in the afternoon, when they were taken down, and, with the two bodies, placed in leaden coffins and deposited in a vault. In spite of the number of spies and executioners who surrounded the scaffold, the citizens of Brussels would not be prevented from dipping their handkerchiefs in the streaming blood, and carrying home with them these precious memorials.<sup>5</sup>

Egmont is a great historical figure, but he was certainly not a great man. His execution remains an enduring monument not only of Philip's cruelty and perfidy but of his dulness. The king had everything to hope from Egmont and nothing to fear. Granvella knew the man well, and, almost to the last, could not believe in the possibility of so unparalleled a blunder as that which was to make a victim, a martyr, and a popular idol of a personage brave indeed, but incredibly vacillating and inordinately vain, who, by a little management, might have been converted into a most useful instrument for the royal purposes.

He had no sympathy with the people, but he loved, as a grand seignior, to be looked up to and admired by a gaping crowd. He was an unwavering Catholic, held sectaries in utter loathing, and, after the image-breaking, took a positive pleasure in hanging ministers, together with their congregations, and in pressing the besieged Christians of Valenciennes to extremities. Upon more than one occasion he pronounced his unequivocal approval of the infamous edicts, and he exerted himself at times to enforce them within his province. The transitory impression made upon his mind by the lofty nature of Orange was easily effaced in Spain by court flattery and by royal bribes. Upon the departure of Orange, Egmont was only too eager to be employed by Philip in any work which the monarch could find for him to do. Yet this was the man whom Philip chose, through the executioner's sword, to convert into a popular idol, and whom Poetry has loved to contemplate as a romantic champion of freedom.

As for Horn, he was a person of mediocre abilities and thoroughly

[<sup>4</sup> Even Bentivoglio becomes softened in relating the pathetic scene. "I hear," wrote Morillon to Granvella (June 7th, 1568), "that his excellency shed tears as big as pease during the execution." (*At jecté des larmes aussi grosses que pois.*)—VAN GROEN PRINSTERER, *Archives*. The prebendary goes on to say that "he had caused the story of the duke's tenderness to be trumpeted in many places" (*a fait sonner où il luy a semblé convenir, quia multorum animi exacerbeti*). Morillon also quotes Alva as having had the effrontery to say that he desired a mitigation of the punishment, but that the king had answered that he could forgive offences against himself, but the crimes committed against God were unpardonable.<sup>4</sup>]

commonplace character. His high rank and his tragic fate are all which make him interesting. The most interesting features in his character are his generosity toward his absent brother and the manliness with which, as Montigny's representative at Tournay, he chose rather to confront the anger of the government, and to incur the deadly revenge of Philip, than make himself the executioner of the harmless Christians in Tournay. In this regard, his conduct is vastly more entitled to our respect than that of Egmont, and he was certainly more deserving of reverence from the people, even though deserted by all men while living, and left headless and solitary in his coffin at St. Gudule. The hatred for Alva, which sprang from the graves of these illustrious victims, waxed daily more intense.<sup>d</sup>

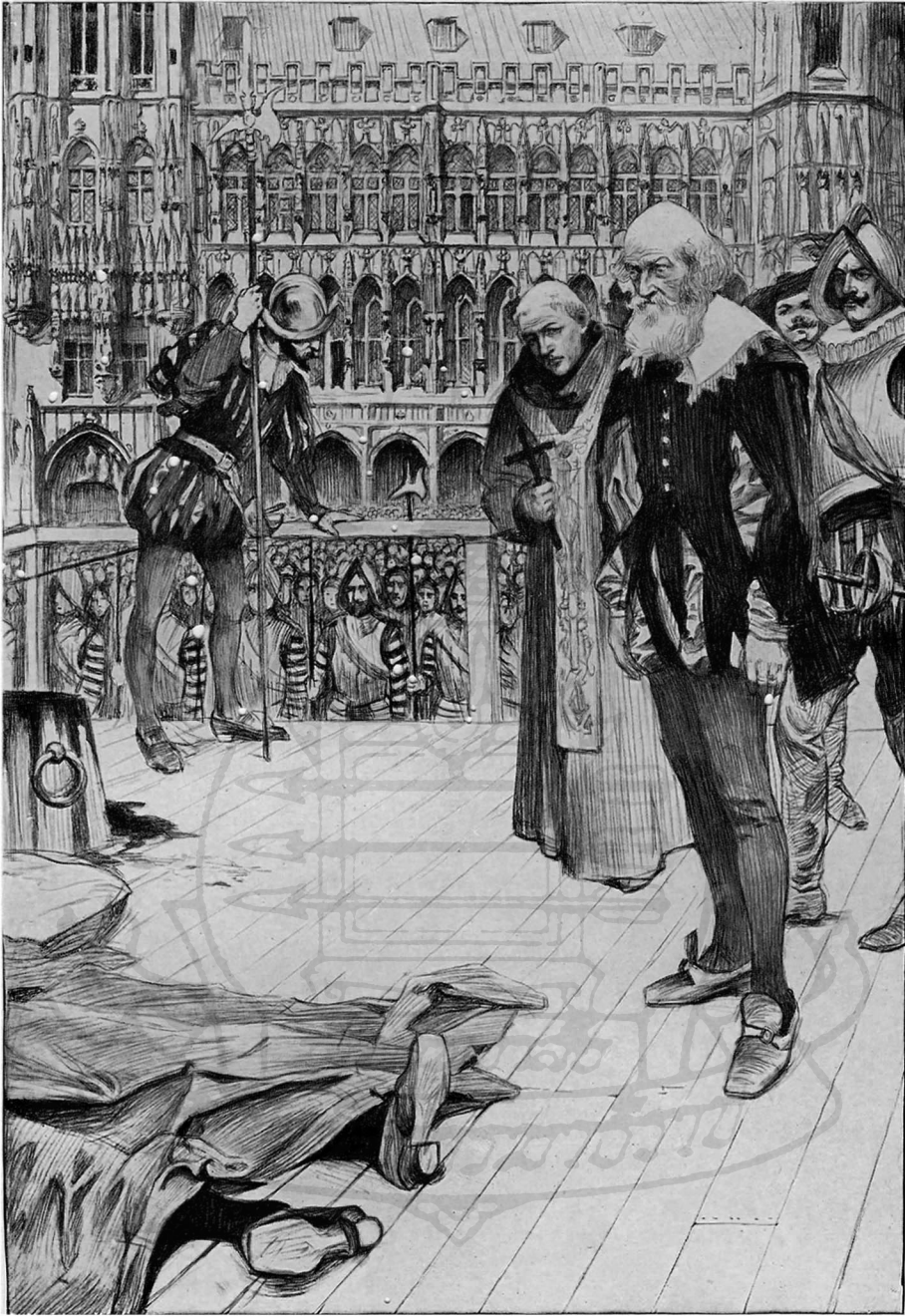
#### THE FIRST CAMPAIGN (1568)

Everything seemed now ripe, both at home and abroad, to favour the enterprise on which the prince of Orange was determined to risk his fortune and his life. But his principal resources were to be found in his genius and courage, and in the heroic devotion partaken by his whole family in the cause of their country. His brother, Count John, advanced him a considerable sum of money; the Flemings and Hollanders, in England and elsewhere, subscribed largely; the prince himself, after raising loans in every possible way on his private means, sold his jewels, his plate, and even the furniture of his houses, and threw the amount into the common fund.

The queen of England, the French Huguenots, and the Protestant princes of Germany all lent him their aid in money or in men; and he opened his first campaign with great advantage. He formed his army into four several corps, intending to enter the country on as many different points, and by a sudden irruption on that most vulnerable to rouse at once the hopes and the co-operation of the people. His brothers Louis and Adolphus, at the head of one of these divisions, had already penetrated into Friesland, and there commenced the contest. The count of Arenberg, governor of this province, assisted by the Spanish troops under Gonsalvo de Braccamonte, had quickly opposed the invaders. They had met on the 23d of May near the abbey of Heiligerlee, which gave its name to the battle; and after a short contest the royalists were defeated with great loss. The count of Arenberg and Adolphus of Nassau encountered in single combat, and fell by each other's hands.<sup>1</sup> The victory was dearly purchased by the loss of this gallant prince, the first of his illustrious family.

Alva immediately hastened to the scene of this first action, and soon forced Count Louis to another at a place called Jemmingen, near the town of Embden, on the 21st of July. Their forces were nearly equal — about fourteen thousand at either side: but all the advantage of discipline and skill was in favour of Alva, and the consequence was the total rout of the patriots with a considerable loss in killed and the whole of the cannon and baggage. The entire province of Friesland was thus again reduced to obedience, and Alva hastened back to Brabant to make head against the prince of Orange. The latter had now under his command an army of twenty-eight thousand men — an imposing force in point of numbers, being double that which his rival was able to muster. He soon made himself master of the towns of Tongres and St. Trond, and the whole province of Liège was in his power. He advanced boldly against Alva, and for several months did all that

[<sup>1</sup> This is Estrada's <sup>h</sup> account, but others differ so much that it is possible only to say that both men died in the battle.]



THE EXECUTION OF EGMONT AND HORN AT BRUSSELS

(From a drawing by Phillipps Ward)

[1568-1569 A.D.]

manceuvring could do to force him to a battle. But the wily veteran knew his trade too well; he felt sure that in time the prince's force would disperse for want of pay and supplies; and he managed his resources so ably that with little risk and scarcely any loss he finally succeeded in his object. In the month of October the prince found himself forced to disband his large but undisciplined force;<sup>1</sup> and he retired into France to recruit his funds and consider on the best measures for some future enterprise.

The insolent triumph of Alva knew no bounds. The rest of the year was consumed in new executions. The hôtel Kuilenburg, the early cradle of Brederode's confederacy, was rased to the ground, and a pillar erected on the spot commemorative of the deed; while Alva, resolved to erect a monument of his success as well as of his hate, had his own statue in brass, formed of the cannons taken at Jemmingen, set up in the citadel of Antwerp, with various symbols of power and an inscription of inflated pride.<sup>2</sup>

#### OPPRESSIVE TAXATION; THE AMNESTY

The maintenance of the army required from two to four million florins (over a million guineas), and it was the royal treasury that had to pay the costs. Philip, deceived by the popular attitude or overwhelmed by the enormity of the burden imposed upon him, enjoined his general to seek in Belgium the needed resources. A plan of taxation was even drawn up in Madrid,<sup>3</sup> and sent to the governor, with orders to put it into immediate execution. It confined itself to two measures, which were to be general: first, the immediate levy of a duty amounting to the hundredth part of the value of all property, real and personal; and for the future a fixed tax of one twentieth on the sale of all real estate and one tenth on the sale of all merchandise and personal property. These were the taxes known as the hundredth, twentieth, and tenth pennies.

The duke of Alva called a general assembly of the states-general at Brussels, in March, 1569, and himself proposed the imposition of these taxes; but immediately lively protests came from all quarters. It was evident that a tax of a tenth on all sales would deal a mortal blow to commerce, and consequently to the general prosperity of the country, already compromised by internal troubles and by the commotions agitating the rest of Europe. The king's partisans were the first to try to turn the governor from a measure<sup>3</sup> as imprudent as it was impracticable and Viglius above all distinguished himself by his frankness. He succeeded in convincing the duke, who contented himself with a subsidy of two millions, to which the assembly consented. But the king and his council were far from satisfied with this transaction, which, far from furnishing the means to pay debts already contracted, was not even sufficient to guarantee the maintenance of the troops in the future.

Philip had moreover some reason to accuse his general, the latter having shown on this occasion no disposition to follow the course prescribed for him. The monarch had sent with the scheme of taxation a proclamation of

[<sup>1</sup> He melted his last plate to satisfy his clamorous German mercenaries; then, with twelve hundred men, he joined the Huguenots in Gascony and fought under the duke of Zweibrücken [or Deux Ponts]. The campaign there was also a failure. The emperor was reconciled with Philip, and even Queen Elizabeth of England for the present wished him well.]

[<sup>2</sup> Motley,<sup>d</sup> however, states that this plan of taxation was due entirely to the duke of Alva and that the authorities at Madrid had nothing to do with it.]

[<sup>3</sup> Blok<sup>j</sup> also points out that a cherished scheme of Alva's was the unifying of all the provinces under one ruler with one capital and one law. This meant a sacrifice of dearly bought and ancient municipal, religious, and individual privileges that aroused ferocious protest. The experiment, however, failed even of trial, on account of new complications.]

amnesty which was to reassure the minds of the people at the very moment when they were to be called on to make new sacrifices. But the duke of Alva thought this amnesty premature. He withheld its publication; and when it was finally proclaimed the following year (1570), it contained so many restrictions that the tardy and incomplete pardon made no favourable impression.

The situation, daily becoming more difficult, was further complicated by an open rupture with England, which dealt a fatal blow to the prosperity of Antwerp and Bruges. Elizabeth, who had succeeded Mary, had long shown herself hostile to Philip. She made the duke of Alva feel her ill-will by the retention of 800,000 gulden sent him by a ship that had put into Plymouth (1568). Elizabeth had appropriated this sum, charging herself, however, with its repayment to the Italian merchants from whom the king had borrowed it. But the duke, who was awaiting this money in order to pay his troops, had been furious and had seized the property and ships of the English in Belgian ports. Whereupon the queen had retaliated and, not content with forbidding all trade with the Low Countries, offered asylum to the privateers which the discontented faction began to fit out and which caused some serious losses to commerce.

Thus came into existence the Beggars of the Sea—a band of bold, adventurous men, whose leaders were the emigrant nobles, the rest sailors from the coast. The success of their first attempts at piracy excited fresh clamours against the government in Belgium; and later deeds of a less doubtful character were to efface these obscure beginnings and to assign to their names a very different place in history.

While unrest and discontent thus increased around the Spanish governor, William of Nassau preserved a threatening attitude. This prince and his brother Louis were equally allied with Lutheran princes of Germany and with the leaders of the Calvinist party in France. They had even fought for the cause of the latter; for in spite of their exile they took part in all the great Protestant enterprises, identifying their cause with that of the cult they professed and seeking, in each European commotion, in some way to advance their own interests. Their hopes revived when the celebrated Coligny and the Huguenots came to an understanding with King Charles IX (1570). A plan was then formed to lead into the Belgian provinces a number of those old bands which for years had been fighting in France. Coligny and his brothers-at-arms were to enter Hainault with their French soldiers, while the prince of Orange at the head of a German army penetrated into Limburg and Brabant. Charles IX gave his consent to this project; the old-time jealousy against Spain made him desire the abasement and humiliation of Philip.

The duke of Alva saw the storm approaching. Pressed by the need of money and by the orders from the court, he made fresh attempts to obtain the consent of the states to the taxes the king wished to establish, but the resistance was the same as in former years. Thereupon he took it upon himself to direct without their consent the collection of the tenth and twentieth penny, violating thus all the rights of the provinces, but imputing the bold step to stern necessity. He consented, however, that a deputation should be sent to the king—in protest. Philip received the deputies with the greatest demonstrations of good will. It is related that he first tried to make them accept the tax as a war contribution; but, finally yielding to their remonstrances, he agreed to its provisional suspension.<sup>k</sup>

One of those frightful inundations to which the northern provinces were so constantly exposed occurred in 1572, carrying away the dikes, and



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destroying lives and property to a considerable amount. In Friesland alone twenty thousand men were victims to this calamity. But no suffering could affect the inflexible sternness of the duke of Alva; and to such excess did he carry his persecution that Philip himself began to be discontented, and thought his representative was overstepping the bounds of delegated tyranny. He even reproached him sharply in some of his despatches. The governor replied in the same strain; and such was the effect of this correspondence that Philip resolved to remove him from his command. But the king's marriage with Anne of Austria, daughter of the emperor Maximilian II, obliged him to defer his intentions for a while; and he at length named John de la Cerda, duke of Medina-Celi, as Alva's successor. Upwards of a year, however, elapsed before this new governor was finally appointed; and he made his appearance on the coast of Flanders with a considerable fleet, on the 11th of May, 1572. He was afforded on this very day a specimen of the sort of people he came to contend with; for his fleet was suddenly attacked by that of the patriots, and many of his vessels were burned and taken before his eyes, with their rich cargoes and considerable treasures intended for the service of the state.<sup>1</sup>

The duke of Medina-Celi proceeded rapidly to Brussels, where he was ceremoniously received by Alva, who however refused to resign the government, under the pretext that the term of his appointment had not expired, and that he was resolved first to completely suppress all symptoms of revolt in the northern provinces. He succeeded in effectually disgusting La Cerda, who demanded and obtained his own recall to Spain. Alva, left once more in undisputed possession of his power, turned it with increased vigour into new channels of oppression. He was soon again employed in efforts to effect the levying of his favourite taxes; and such was the resolution of the tradesmen of Brussels that, sooner than submit, they almost universally closed their shops altogether. Alva, furious at this measure, caused sixty of the citizens to be seized, and ordered them to be hanged opposite their own doors. The gibbets were actually erected, when, on the very day fixed for the executions, he received despatches that wholly disconcerted him, and stopped their completion.<sup>2</sup>

In the night arrived the intelligence that the town of Briel had been captured. The duke, feeling the full gravity of the situation, postponed the chastisement which he had thus secretly planned to a more convenient season, in order, without an instant's hesitation, to avert the consequences of this new movement on the part of the rebels.

#### THE SEA BEGGARS TAKE BRIEL

Allusion has been made to those formidable partisans of the patriot cause, the marine outlaws. Cheated of half their birthright by nature, and now driven forth from their narrow isthmus by tyranny, the exiled Hollanders took to the ocean. Its boundless fields, long arable to their industry, became more fruitful than ever now that oppression was transforming a peaceful seafaring people into a nation of corsairs.

The beggars of the sea asked their alms through the mouths of their

[<sup>1</sup> It was the richest booty which the insurgents had yet acquired by sea or land. The fleet was laden with spices, money, jewelry, and the richest merchandise. Five hundred thousand crowns of gold were taken, and it was calculated that the plunder altogether would suffice to maintain the war for two years at least. One thousand Spanish soldiers and a good amount of ammunition were also captured. — MOTLEY.<sup>4</sup>]

cannon. Unfortunately, they but too often made their demands upon both friend and foe. Every ruined merchant, every banished lord, every reckless mariner, who was willing to lay the commercial world under contribution to repair his damaged fortunes, could, without much difficulty, be supplied with a vessel and crew at some northern port, under colour of cruising against the viceroy's government. Nor was the ostensible motive simply a pretext. To make war upon Alva was the leading object of all these freebooters, and they were usually furnished by the prince of Orange, in his capacity of sovereign, with letters of marque for that purpose. The prince, indeed, did his utmost to control and direct an evil which had inevitably grown out of the horrors of the time. His admiral, William de la Marck, was, however, incapable of comprehending the lofty purposes of his superior. A wild, sanguinary, licentious noble, wearing his hair and beard unshorn, according to ancient Batavian custom, until the death of his relative Egmont should have been expiated, a worthy descendant of the Wild Boar of Ardenaes, this hirsute and savage corsair seemed an embodiment of vengeance. He had sworn to wreak upon Alva and upon popery the deep revenge owed to them by the Netherland nobility, and in the cruelties afterwards practised by him upon monks and priests, the Blood Council learned that their example had made at least one ripe scholar among the rebels. He was lying at this epoch with his fleet on the southern coast of England, from which advantageous position he was now to be ejected in a summary manner.

The negotiations between the duke of Alva and Queen Elizabeth had now assumed an amicable tone, and were fast ripening to an adjustment. It was urged that the continued countenance afforded by the English people to the Netherland cruisers must inevitably lead to a war with Philip. In the latter days of March, 1572, therefore, a sentence of virtual excommunication was pronounced against De la Marck and his rovers. A peremptory order of Elizabeth forbade any of her subjects to supply them with meat, bread, or beer. The command being strictly complied with, their further stay was rendered impossible. Twenty-four vessels accordingly set sail from Dover in the very last days of March. Being almost in a state of starvation, these adventurers determined to make a sudden foray upon the coasts of North Holland. On Palm Sunday they captured two Spanish merchantmen. Soon afterwards, however, the wind becoming contrary, they abandoned their original intention, dropped down towards Zealand, and entered the broad mouth of the river Maas.

Among the ships was that of William of Blois, seigneur of Treslong. This adventurous noble, whose brother had been executed by the duke of Alva in 1568, had himself fought by the side of Count Louis at Jemmingen, and, although covered with wounds, had been one of the few who escaped alive from the horrible carnage. During the intervening period he had become one of the most famous rebels on the ocean, and he had always been well known in Briel, where his father had been governor for the king. Treslong, who was really the hero of this memorable adventure, persuaded De la Marck to send a message to the city of Briel, demanding its surrender. This was a bold summons to be made by a handful of men.

The city of Briel (or Brill) was not populous but it was well walled and fortified. It was, moreover, a most commodious port. The whole rebel force was divided into two parties, one of which under Treslong made an attack upon the southern gate. Treslong, after a short struggle, succeeded in forcing his entrance. De la Marck and his men made a bonfire at the northern gate, and then battered down the half-burned portal with the end

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of an old mast. Thus rudely and rapidly did the Netherland patriots conduct their first successful siege. The two parties, not more perhaps than two hundred and fifty men in all, met before sunset in the centre of the city, and the foundation of the Dutch Republic was laid. The weary spirit of freedom, so long a fugitive over earth and sea, had at last found a resting place, which rude and even ribald hands had prepared.

The panic created by the first appearance of the fleet had been so extensive that hardly fifty citizens had remained in the town. The rest had all escaped, with as much property as they could carry away. The admiral, in the name of the prince of Orange, as lawful stadholder of Philip, took formal possession of an almost deserted city. No indignity was offered to the inhabitants of either sex, but as soon as the conquerors were fairly established in the best houses of the place, the inclination to plunder the churches could no longer be restrained. The altars and images were all destroyed, the rich furniture and gorgeous vestments appropriated to private use. Adam van Haren appeared on his vessel's deck attired in a magnificent high mass chasuble. Treslong thenceforth used no drinking cups in his cabin save the golden chalices of the sacrament. Unfortunately, their hatred to popery was not confined to such demonstrations. Thirteen unfortunate monks and priests, who had been unable to affect their escape, were arrested and thrown into prison, from whence they were taken a few days later, by order of the ferocious admiral, and executed under circumstances of great barbarity.

The news of this important exploit spread with great rapidity. Alva, surprised at the very moment of venting his rage on the butchers and grocers of Brussels, deferred this savage design in order to deal with the new difficulty. He had certainly not expected such a result from the ready compliance of Queen Elizabeth with his request. The punsters of Brussels were sure not to let such an opportunity escape them, for the name of the captured town was susceptible of a quibble, and the event had taken place upon All Fools' Day.

On April Fool's Day,  
Duke Alva's spectacles were stolen away

became a popular couplet. The word "spectacles," in Flemish, as well as the name of the suddenly surprised city, being Brill, this allusion to the duke's loss and implied purblindness was not destitute of ingenuity.

The duke, however, lost not an instant in attempting to repair the disaster. Count Bossu, who had acted as stadholder of Holland and Zeeland under Alva's authority, since the prince of Orange had resigned that office, was ordered at once to recover the conquered seaport, if possible. The patriots, being very few in number, were at first afraid to venture outside the gates to attack the much superior force of their invaders. A carpenter, however, dashed into the water with his axe in his hand, and swimming to the Niewland sluice hacked it open with a few vigorous strokes. The sea poured in at once, making the approach to the city upon the north side impossible. Bossu then led his Spaniards along the Niewland dike to the southern gate, where they were received with a warm discharge of artillery, which completely staggered them. Meantime, Treslong and Robol had, in the most daring manner, rowed out to the ships which had brought the enemy to the island, cut some adrift, and set others on fire. The Spaniards at the southern gate caught sight of their blazing vessels, saw the sea rapidly rising over the dike, became panic-struck at being thus enclosed between fire and water, and dashed off in precipitate retreat along the slippery causeway and through the slimy

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and turbid waters, which were fast threatening to overwhelm them.<sup>1</sup> Many were drowned or smothered in their flight, but the greater portion of the force effected their escape in the vessels which still remained within reach. This danger averted, Admiral de la Marck summoned all the inhabitants, a large number of whom had returned to the town after the capture had been fairly established, and required them, as well as all the population of the island, to take an oath of allegiance to the prince of Orange as stadholder for his majesty.

#### THE REVOLT OF THE TOWNS

The example thus set by Briel and later by Flushing was rapidly followed. The first half of the year 1572 was distinguished by a series of triumphs rendered still more remarkable by the reverses which followed at its close. Of a sudden, almost as it were by accident, a small but important seaport, the object for which the prince had so long been hoping, was secured. Instantly afterwards, half the island of Walcheren renounced the yoke of Alva. Next, Enkhuizen, the key to the Zuyder Zee, the principal arsenal and one of the first commercial cities in the Netherlands, rose against the Spanish admiral, and hung out the banner of Orange on its ramparts. The revolution effected here was purely the work of the people — of the mariners and burghers of the city. By the same spontaneous movement, nearly all the important cities of Holland and Zealand raised the standard of him in whom they recognised their deliverer. The revolution was accomplished under nearly similar circumstances everywhere. With one fierce bound of enthusiasm the nation shook off its chain.

Nor was it in Holland and Zealand alone that the beacon fires of freedom were lighted. City after city in Gelderland, Overysse, and the see of Utrecht; all the important towns of Friesland, some sooner, some later, some without a struggle, some after a short siege, some with resistance by the functionaries of government, some by amicable compromise — accepted the garrisons of the prince, and formally recognised his authority. Out of the chaos which a long and preternatural tyranny had produced, the first struggling elements of a new and a better world began to appear. It were superfluous to narrate the details which marked the sudden restoration of liberty in these various groups of cities. Traits of generosity marked the change of government in some, circumstances of ferocity disfigured the revolution in others. The combats were perpetual and sanguinary, the prisoners on both sides instantly executed. On more than one occasion, men were seen assisting to hang with their own hands and in cold blood their own brothers, who had been taken prisoners in the enemy's ranks. When the captives were too many to be hanged, they were tied back to back, two and two, and thus hurled into the sea. The islanders found a fierce pleasure in these acts of cruelty. A Spaniard had ceased to be human in their eyes. On one occasion, a surgeon at Veer cut the heart from a Spanish prisoner, nailed it on a vessel's prow, and invited the townsmen to come and fasten their teeth in it, which many did with savage satisfaction. In other parts of the country the revolution was, on the whole, accomplished with comparative calmness. Even traits of generosity were not uncommon.

A new board of magistrates had been chosen in all the redeemed cities, by popular election. They were required to take an oath of fidelity to the king of Spain, and to the prince of Orange as his stadholder; to promise

[<sup>1</sup> "*Door slyk, door slop, door dik en dun*" are the homely but vigorous expressions of the Netherland chronicler Bor.]

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resistance to the duke of Arva, the tenth penny, and the Inquisition; "to support every man's freedom and the welfare of the country — to protect widows, orphans, and miserable per ons, and to maintain justice and truth."

Diedrich Sonoy arrived on the 2nd of June at Enkhuizen. He was provided by the prince with a commission, appointing him lieutenant-governor of North Holland or Waterland. Thus, to combat the authority of Alva, was set up the authority of the king.<sup>1</sup> The stadholderate over Holland and Zealand to which the prince had been appointed, in 1559, he now reassumed. Upon this fiction reposed the whole provisional polity of the revolted Netherlands.

The written instructions given by the prince to his lieutenant Sonoy were to "see that the word of God was preached, without, however, suffering any hinderance to the Roman Church in the exercise of its religion; to restore fugitives and the banished for conscience' sake, and to require of all magistrates and officers of guilds and brotherhoods an oath of fidelity." The prince likewise prescribed the form of that oath, repeating therein, to his eternal honour, the same strict prohibition of intolerance. "Likewise," said the formula, "shall those of 'the religion' offer no let or hinderance to the Roman churches."

The prince was still in Germany, engaged in raising troops and providing funds. He directed, however, the affairs of the insurgent provinces in their minutest details, by virtue of the dictatorship inevitably forced upon him both by circumstances and by the people. In the meantime, Louis of Nassau, the Bayard of the Netherlands, performed a most unexpected and brilliant exploit. He had been long in France, negotiating with the leaders of the Huguenots, and, more secretly, with the court. He was supposed by all the world to be still in that kingdom, when the startling intelligence arrived that he had surprised and captured the important city of Mons, the capital of Hainault.

#### THE STATES-GENERAL AT DORT (1572)

Meantime, the duke, who was literally "without a single real" was forced at last to smother his pride in the matter of the tenth penny. On the 24th of June he summoned the states of Holland to assemble on the 15th of the ensuing month. In the missive issued for this purpose he formally agreed to abolish the whole tax, on condition that the states-general of the Netherlands would furnish him with a yearly supply of two millions of florins.

The states of Holland met, indeed, on the appointed day of July, but they assembled not in obedience to Alva but in consequence of a summons from William of Orange. The prince had again assembled an army in Germany, consisting of fifteen thousand foot and seven thousand horse, besides a number of Netherlanders, mostly Walloons, amounting to nearly three thousand more. Before taking the field, however, it was necessary that he should guarantee at least three months' pay to his troops. This he could no longer do, except by giving bonds endorsed by certain cities of Holland as his securities. He had accordingly addressed letters in his own name to all the principal cities, fervently adjuring them to remember, at last, what was due to him, to the fatherland, and to their own character.

"Let not a sum of gold," said he, in one of these letters, "be so dear to you, that for its sake you will sacrifice your lives, your wives, your children, and all your descendants, to the latest generations; that you will bring sin

[<sup>1</sup> With this attitude of loyalty to a sovereign and resistance to his ministers, should be compared the similar beginnings of the French and American Revolutions.]

and shame upon yourselves, and destruction upon us who have so heartily striven to assist you. Think what scorn you will incur from foreign nations, what a crime you will commit against the Lord God, what a bloody yoke you will impose forever upon yourselves and your children, if you now seek for subterfuges; if you now prevent us from taking the field with the troops which we have enlisted. On the other hand, what inexpressible benefits you will confer on your country, if you now help us to rescue that fatherland from the power of Spanish vultures and wolves."

This and similar missives, circulated throughout the province of Holland, produced a deep impression. In accordance with his suggestions, the deputies from the nobility and from twelve cities of that province assembled on the 15th of July, at Dort. Strictly speaking, the states or government of Holland, the body which represented the whole people, consisted of the nobles and six great cities. On this occasion, however, Amsterdam, being still in the power of the king, could send no deputies; while, on the other hand, all the small towns were invited to send up their representatives to the congress. Fright accepted the proposal; the rest declined to appoint delegates, partly from motives of economy, partly from timidity.

These states were the legitimate representatives of the people, but they had no legislative powers. The people had never pretended to sovereignty, nor did they claim it now. The source from which the government of the Netherlands was supposed to proceed was still the divine mandate. The prince represented the royal authority, the nobles represented both themselves and the people of the open country, while the twelve cities represented the whole body of burghers. Together, they were supposed to embody all authority, both divine and human, which a congress could exercise. Thus the whole movement was directed against Alva and against Count Bossu, appointed stadholder by Alva in the place of Orange. Philip's name was destined to figure for a long time at the head of documents by which moneys were raised, troops levied, and taxes collected, all to be used in deadly war against himself.

The states were convened on the 15th of July, when Paul Buys, pensionary of Leyden, the tried and confidential friend of Orange, was elected advocate of Holland. The convention was then adjourned till the 18th, when Sainte-Aldegonde made his appearance, with full powers to act provisionally in behalf of his highness. The impassioned eloquence of Sainte-Aldegonde produced a profound impression. The men who had obstinately refused the demands of Alva now unanimously resolved to pour forth their gold and their blood at the call of Orange. "Truly," wrote the duke, a little later, "it almost drives me mad to see the difficulty with which your majesty's supplies are furnished, and the liberality with which the people place their lives and fortunes at the disposal of this rebel." It seemed strange to the loyal governor that men should support their liberator with greater alacrity than that with which they served their destroyer! All seemed determined, rather than pay the tenth to Alva, to pay the whole to the prince.

The states, furthermore, by unanimous resolution, declared that they recognised the prince as the king's lawful stadholder over Holland, Zealand, Friesland, and Utrecht, and that they would use their influence with the other provinces to procure his appointment as protector of all the Netherlands during the king's absence. His highness was requested to appoint an admiral, on whom, with certain deputies from the water-cities, the conduct of the maritime war should devolve. With regard to religion, it was firmly established that the public exercises of divine worship should be permitted

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not only to the Reformed Church but to the Roman Catholic — the clergy of both being protected from all molestation.

After these proceedings, Count de la Marck made his appearance before the assembly. His commission from Orange was read to the deputies, and by them ratified. The prince, in that document, authorised his "dear cousin" to enlist troops, to accept the fealty of cities, to furnish them with garrisons, to re-establish all the local laws, municipal rights, and ancient privileges which had been suppressed.

## FIRST SUCCESSES

Meanwhile the war had opened vigorously in Hainault. Louis of Nassau had no sooner found himself in possession of Mons than he had despatched Genlis to France for those reinforcements which had been promised by royal lips. On the other hand, [Alva's son] Don Frederick held the city closely beleaguered; sharp combats before the walls were of almost daily occurrence.

On the 7th of July William crossed the Rhine at Duisburg, with fourteen thousand foot and seven thousand horse, enlisted in Germany, besides a force of three thousand Walloons. On the 23rd of July he took the city of Roermond, after a sharp cannonade, at which place his troops already began to disgrace the honourable cause in which they were engaged, by imitating the cruelties and barbarities of their antagonists; many priests and monks were put to death by the soldiery under circumstances of great barbarity. The prince, incensed at such conduct, but being unable to exercise very stringent authority over troops whose wages he was not yet able to pay in full, issued a proclamation denouncing such excesses and commanding his followers, upon pain of death, to respect the rights of all individuals, whether papist or Protestant, and to protect religious exercises both in Catholic and Reformed churches.

It was hardly to be expected that the troops enlisted by the prince in the same great magazine of hiring soldiers, Germany, whence the duke also derived his annual supplies, would be likely to differ very much in their propensities from those enrolled under Spanish banners; yet there was a vast contrast between the characters of the two commanders. One leader inculcated the practice of robbery, rape, and murder, as a duty, and issued distinct orders to butcher "every mother's son" in the cities which he captured; the other restrained every excess to the utmost of his ability, protecting not only life and property but even the ancient religion.

The prince had been delayed for a month at Roermond; because, as he expressed it, "he had not a single sou," and because, in consequence, the troops refused to advance into the Netherlands. Having at last been furnished with the requisite guarantees from the Holland cities for three months' pay, on the 27th of August he crossed the Maas and took his circuitous way through Diest, Tirlemont, Siehem, Dendermonde, Louvain, Mechlin, Oudenarde, Nivelles. Many cities and villages accepted his authority and admitted his garrisons.

Louvain purchased its neutrality for the time with 16,000 ducats; Brussels obstinately refused to listen to him, and was too powerful to be forcibly attacked at that juncture; other important cities, convinced by the arguments and won by the eloquence of the various proclamations which he scattered as he advanced, ranged themselves spontaneously and even enthusiastically upon his side. How different would have been the result of his campaign but for the unexpected earthquake which at that instant was to

appal Christendom, and to scatter all his well-matured plans and legitimate hopes. His chief reliance, under providence and his own strong heart, had been upon French assistance.

On the 11th of August, Coligny had written hopefully of his movements towards the Netherlands, sanctioned and aided by his king. A fortnight from that day occurred the "Paris wedding" [the St. Bartholomew massacre], and the admiral, with thousands of his religious confederates, invited to confidence by superhuman treachery, and lulled into security by the music of August marriage-bells, was suddenly butchered in the streets of Paris by royal and noble hands.

The prince proceeded on his march, but he felt convinced that, with the very arrival of the awful tidings, the fate of that campaign was sealed, and the fall of Mons inevitable. In his own language, he had been struck to the earth "with the blow of a sledge-hammer"; nor did the enemy draw a different augury from the great event. Nothing certainly could, in Philip's apprehension, be more delightful than this most unexpected and most opportune intelligence. Charles IX, whose intrigues in the Netherlands he had long known, had now been suddenly converted by his stupendous crime into his most powerful ally, while at the same time the Protestants of Europe would learn that there was still another crowned head in Christendom more deserving of abhorrence than himself.

Such was the condition of affairs when the prince of Orange arrived at Péronne, between Binche and the duke of Alva's entrenchments. The besieging army was rich in notabilities of elevated rank. Don Frederick of Toledo had hitherto commanded, but on the 27th of August the dukes of Medina-Celi and of Alva had arrived in the camp. Directly afterwards came the warlike archbishop of Cologne, at the head of two thousand cavalry. There was but one chance for the prince of Orange, and experience had taught him, four years before, its slenderness.<sup>1</sup> He might still provoke his adversary into a pitched battle, and he relied upon God for the result. In his own words, "he trusted ever that the great God of armies was with him, and would fight in the midst of his forces."

The Huguenot soldiers within Mons were in despair and mutiny; Louis of Nassau lay in his bed consuming with a dangerous fever; Genlis had been taken prisoner, and his army cut to pieces; Coligny was murdered, and Protestant France paralysed; the troops of Orange, enlisted but for three months, were already rebellious, and sure to break into open insubordination when the consequences of the Paris massacre should become entirely clear to them.

At midnight September 11, the Spaniards made a sudden attack, the sentinels were cut down, the whole army surprised, and for a moment powerless, while, for two hours long, from one o'clock in the morning until three, the Spaniards butchered their foes, hardly aroused from their sleep, ignorant by how small a force they had been thus suddenly surprised, and unable in the confusion to distinguish between friend and foe.

The boldest, led by Julian Romero, made at once for the prince's tent. His guards and himself were in profound sleep, but a small spaniel was a more faithful sentinel. The creature sprang forward, barking furiously at the sound of hostile footsteps, and scratching his master's face with his paws.

[<sup>1</sup> Blok calls attention to the fact that William was now suffering, in addition to his political distresses, a grievous domestic calamity: Anna of Saxony, whom he had taken to wife after some opposition, repeatedly offered submission to Alva, and finally was found guilty of adultery with the father of the great painter Rubens. She was shut up in prison at Dillenburg, in March, 1571, as a madwoman, and died insane. Meanwhile Alva kept paid assassins on the hunt for William's life.]



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There was but just time for the prince to mount a horse which was ready saddled, and to effect his escape through the darkness, before his enemies sprang into the tent. His servants were cut down, his master of the horse and two of his secretaries, who gained their saddles a moment later, all lost their lives; and but for the little dog's watchfulness William of Orange, upon whose shoulders the whole weight of his country's fortunes depended, would have been led within a week to an ignominious death. To his dying day, the prince ever afterwards kept a spaniel of the same race in his bed-chamber. Six hundred of the prince's troops had been put to the sword, while many others were burned in their beds, or drowned in the little rivulet which flowed outside their camp. Only sixty Spaniards lost their lives.

## COLLAPSE OF WILLIAM'S PLANS

The whole marrow of William's enterprise had been destroyed in an instant by the massacre of St. Bartholomew. He retreated to Péronne and Nivelles, an assassin, named Heist, a German by birth but a French chevalier, following him secretly in his camp, pledged to take his life for a large reward promised by Alva — an enterprise not destined, however, to be successful.

The soldiers flatly refused to remain an hour longer in the field, or even to furnish an escort for Count Louis, if, by chance, he could be brought out of the town. The prince was obliged to inform his brother of the desperate state of his affairs, and to advise him to capitulate on the best terms which he could make. With a heavy heart, he left the chivalrous Louis besieged in the city which he had so gallantly captured, and took his way across the Maas towards the Rhine. A furious mutiny broke out among his troops. His life was, with difficulty, saved from the brutal soldiery infuriated at his inability to pay them except in the overdue securities of the Holland cities. Crossing the Rhine at Orsoy, he disbanded his army.

Yet even in this hour of distress and defeat, the prince seemed more heroic than many a conqueror in his day of triumph. He went to Holland, the only province which remained true, and which still looked up to him as its saviour; but he went thither expecting and prepared to perish. "There I will make my sepulchre," was his simple and sublime expression in a private letter to his brother.

Meanwhile, Count Louis lay confined to his couch with a burning fever. His soldiers refused any longer to hold the city.

On the 19th of September, accordingly, articles of capitulation were signed. The town was given over to Alva, but all the soldiers were to go out with their weapons and property. After Louis and his troops had retired, Noircarmes, in brutal violation of the terms upon which the town had surrendered, now set about the work of massacre and pillage. A commission of Troubles, in close imitation of the famous Blood Council at Brussels, was established, the members of the tribunal being appointed by Noircarmes and all being inhabitants of the town. The council commenced proceedings by condemning all the volunteers, although expressly included in the capitulation. Their wives and children were all banished; their property was all confiscated. On the 15th of December the executions commenced.

## SPANISH ATROCITIES

The Spaniards had thus recovered Mons, by which event the temporary revolution throughout the whole Southern Netherlands was at an end. The

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keys of that city unlocked the gates of every other in Brabant and Flanders. The towns which had so lately embraced the authority of Orange now hastened to disavow the prince and to return to their ancient, hypocritical, and cowardly allegiance. The new oaths of fidelity were in general accepted by Alva, but the beautiful archiepiscopal city of Mechlin was selected for an example and a sacrifice. There were heavy arrears due to the Spanish troops. To indemnify them, and to make good his blasphemous prophecy of divine chastisement for its past misdeeds, Alva now abandoned this town to the license of his soldiery.



A NOBLEWOMAN OF THE SIX-  
TEENTH CENTURY

Three days long the horrible scene continued — one day for the benefit of the Spaniards, two more for that of the Walloons and Germans. All the churches, monasteries, religious houses of every kind were completely sacked. Every valuable article which they contained, the ornaments of altars, the reliquaries, chalices, embroidered curtains, and carpets of velvet or damask, the golden robes of the priests, the repositories of the host, the precious vessels of crism and extreme unction, the rich clothing and jewelry adorning the effigies of the Holy Virgin — all were indiscriminately rifled by the Spanish soldiers. The holy wafers were trampled under foot, the sacramental wine was poured upon the ground, and, in brief, all the horrors which had been committed by the iconoclasts in their wildest moments, and for a thousandth part of which enormities heretics had been burned in droves, were now repeated in Mechlin by the especial soldiers of Christ, by Roman Catholics who had been sent to the Netherlands to avenge the insults offered to the Roman Catholic faith. The motive, too, which inspired the sacrilegious crew was not fanaticism, but the desire of plunder.

The iconoclasts of 1566 had destroyed millions of property for the sake of an idea, but they had appropriated nothing. Moreover, they had scarcely injured a human being, confining their wrath to graven images. The Spaniards at Mechlin spared neither man nor woman. The murders and outrages would be incredible, were they not attested by most respectable Catholic witnesses. Men were butchered in their houses, in the streets, at the altars. Women were violated by hundreds in churches and in graveyards. Moreover, the deed had been as deliberately arranged as it was thoroughly performed. It was sanctioned by the highest authority.

Zutphen attempted a feeble opposition to the entrance of the king's troops, and received a dreadful chastisement in consequence. Alva sent orders to his son to leave not a single man alive in the city, and to burn every house to the ground. The duke's command was almost literally obeyed. As the work of death became too fatiguing for the butchers, five hundred innocent burghers were tied two and two, back to back, and drowned like dogs in the river Yssel. A few stragglers, who had contrived to elude pursuit at first,

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were afterwards taken from their hiding-places, and hung upon the gallows by the feet, some of which victims suffered days and nights of agony before death came to their relief. Nearly all of the inhabitants of Naarden were similarly destroyed, and for a long time Naarden ceased to exist. Alva wrote, with his usual complacency in such cases, to his sovereign, that they had cut the throats of the burghers and all the garrison, and that they had not left a mother's son alive. The statement was almost literally correct, nor was the cant with which these bloodhounds commented upon their crimes less odious than their guilt.

It is not without reluctance, but still with a stern determination, that the historian should faithfully record these transactions. To extenuate would be base; to exaggerate impossible. It is good that the world should not forget how much wrong has been endured by a single nation at the hands of despotism, and in the sacred name of God. There have been tongues and pens enough to narrate the excesses of the people, bursting from time to time out of slavery into madness. It is good, too, that those crimes should be remembered, and freshly pondered; but it is equally wholesome to study the opposite picture. Tyranny, ever young and ever old, constantly reproducing herself with the same stony features, with the same imposing mask which she has worn through all ages, can never be too minutely examined, especially when she paints her own portrait, and when the secret history of her guilt is furnished by the confessions of her lovers. The perusal of her traits will not make us love popular liberty the less.

The history of Alva's administration in the Netherlands is one of those pictures which strike us almost dumb with wonder. Was it necessary that many generations should wade through this blood in order to acquire for their descendants the blessings of civil and religious freedom?

The hearts of the Hollanders were rather steeled to resistance than awed into submission by the fate of Naarden. A fortunate event, too, was accepted as a lucky omen for the coming contest. A little fleet of armed vessels, belonging to Holland, had been frozen up in the neighbourhood of Amsterdam. Don Frederick, on his arrival from Naarden, despatched a body of picked men over the ice to attack the imprisoned vessels. The crews had, however, fortified themselves by digging a wide trench around the whole fleet, which thus became from the moment an almost impregnable fortress. Out of this frozen citadel a strong band of well-armed and skilful musketeers sallied forth upon skates as the besieging force advanced. A rapid, brilliant, and slippery skirmish succeeded, in which the Hollanders, so accustomed to such sports, easily vanquished their antagonists, and drove them off the field, with the loss of several hundred left dead upon the ice. "Twas a thing never heard of before to-day," said Alva, "to see a body of arquebusiers thus skirmishing upon a frozen sea." In the course of the next four-and-twenty hours a flood and a rapid thaw released the vessels, which all escaped to Enkhuizen, while a frost, immediately and strangely succeeding, made pursuit impossible.

The Spaniards were astonished at these novel manœuvres upon the ice. It is amusing to read their elaborate descriptions of the wonderful appendages which had enabled the Hollanders to glide so glibly into battle with a superior force, and so rapidly to glance away, after achieving a signal triumph. Nevertheless, the Spaniards could never be dismayed, and were always apt scholars, even if an enemy were the teacher. Alva immediately ordered seven thousand pairs of skates, and his soldiers soon learned to perform military evolutions with these new accoutrements as audaciously, if not as adroitly, as the Hollanders.

## THE SIEGE OF HAARLEM (1572-1573)

On December 11th, 1572, Don Frederick appeared before the walls of Haarlem and proceeded regularly to invest the place, nor did he cease reinforcing himself until at least thirty thousand men, including fifteen hundred cavalry, had been encamped around the city. Against this immense force, nearly equal in number to that of the whole population of the city, the garrison within the walls never amounted to more than four thousand men, one thousand pioneers or delvers, three thousand fighting men, and about three hundred fighting women. The last was a most efficient corps, all females of respectable character, armed with sword, musket, and dagger. The chief, Kanau Hasselaer, was a widow of distinguished family and unblemished reputation, about forty-seven years of age, who, at the head of her amazons, participated in many of the most fiercely contested actions of the siege, both within and without the walls.

Meantime, the prince of Orange, from his headquarters at Sassenheim, on the southern extremity of the mere, made every effort to throw succour into the place. The famous siege lasted during the winter and early spring. Alva might well write to his sovereign, that "it was a war such as never before was seen or heard of in any land on earth." Yet the duke had known near sixty years of warfare. After nearly six years' experience, he had found its "people of butter" less malleable than even those "iron people" whom he boasted of having tamed.

All efforts at relief failing, however, the ravages of starvation compelled a formal surrender on the 12th of July, 1573. On the following morning the massacre commenced. The plunder had been commuted for two hundred and forty thousand guilders, which the citizens bound themselves to pay in four instalments; but murder was an indispensable accompaniment of victory and admitted of no compromise. The garrison were immediately butchered. Five executioners, with their attendants, were kept constantly at work; and when at last they were exhausted with fatigue, or perhaps sickened with horror, three hundred wretches were tied two and two, back to back, and drowned in the Haarlem Lake.

At last, after twenty-three hundred human creatures had been murdered in cold blood, within a city where so many thousands had previously perished by violent or by lingering deaths, the blasphemous farce of a pardon was enacted. Ten thousand two hundred and fifty-six shots had been discharged against the walls during the siege. Twelve thousand of the besieging army had died of wounds or disease, during the seven months and two days between the investment and the surrender.

## REVIVAL OF DUTCH EFFORTS

It was obvious that, if the reduction of Haarlem were a triumph, it was one which the conquerors might well exchange for a defeat. At any rate, it was certain that the Spanish empire was not strong enough to sustain many more such victories. If it had required thirty thousand choice troops, among which were three regiments called by Alva respectively the "Invincibles," the "Immortals," and the "None-such," to conquer the weakest city of Holland in seven months, and with the loss of twelve thousand men; how many men, how long a time, and how many deaths would it require to reduce the rest of that little province? Even the treasures of the New World were inadequate to pay for the conquest of that little sand-bank. Within five

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years, 25,000,000 florins had been sent from Spain for war expenses in the Netherlands. Yet this amount, with the addition of large sums annually derived from confiscations, of five millions at which the proceeds of the hundredth penny was estimated, and the two millions yearly for which the tenth and twentieth pence had been compounded, was insufficient to save the treasury from beggary and the unpaid troops from mutiny.<sup>d</sup>

Ter Goes in South Beveland and other towns were about the same period the scenes of gallant actions, and of subsequent cruelties of the most revolting nature, as soon as they fell into the power of the Spaniards. Horrors like these were sure to force reprisals on the part of the maddened patriots. De la Marek carried on his daring exploits with a cruelty which excited the indignation of the prince of Orange, by whom he was removed from his command. The contest was for a while prosecuted, with a decrease of vigour proportioned to the serious losses on both sides; money and the munitions of war began to fail; and though the Spaniards succeeded in taking the Hague, they were repulsed before Alkmaar with great loss, and their fleet was almost entirely destroyed in a naval combat on the Zuyder Zee. The count Bossu, their admiral, was taken in this fight, with about three hundred of his best sailors.<sup>i</sup>

The states of the Netherlands had been formally assembled by Alva in September, at Brussels, to devise ways and means for continuing the struggle. It seemed to the prince a good opportunity to make an appeal to the patriotism of the whole country. He furnished the province of Holland, accordingly, with the outlines of an address which was forthwith despatched, in their own and his name, to the general assembly of the Netherlands:

“’Tis only by the Netherlands that the Netherlands are crushed,” said the appeal. “Whence has the duke of Alva the power of which he boasts, but from yourselves—from Netherland cities? Whence his ships, supplies, money, weapons, soldiers? From the Netherland people. Why has poor Netherland thus become degenerate and bastard? Whither has fled the noble spirit of our brave forefathers, that never brooked the tyranny of foreign nations, nor suffered a stranger even to hold office within our borders? If the little province of Holland can thus hold at bay the power of Spain, what could not all the Netherlands—Brabant, Flanders, Friesland, and the rest united—accomplish?”

At almost the same time the prince drew up and put in circulation one of the most impassioned productions which ever came from his pen. It was entitled, an “Epistle, in form of supplication, to his royal majesty of Spain, from the prince of Orange and the states of Holland and Zealand.” The document produced a profound impression throughout Christendom. It was a loyal appeal to the monarch’s loyalty—a demand that the land privileges should be restored, and the duke of Alva removed. It contained a startling picture of his atrocities and the nation’s misery, and, with a few energetic strokes, demolished the pretence that these sorrows had been caused by the people’s guilt. In this connection the prince alluded to those acts of condemnation which the governor-general had promulgated under the name of pardons, and treated with scorn the hypothesis that any crimes had been committed for Alva to forgive.

After having set forth the tyranny of the government and the innocence of the people, the prince, in his own name and that of the states, announced the determination at which they had arrived:

“The tyrant,” he continued, “would rather stain every river and brook with our blood, and hang our bodies upon every tree in the country, than not feed to the full his vengeance, and steep himself to the lips in our misery. Therefore we have taken up arms against the duke of Alva and his adherents, to free ourselves, our wives, and children from his blood-

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thirsty hands. If he prove too strong for us, we will rather die an honourable death and leave a praiseworthy fame, than bend our necks and reduce our dear fatherland to such slavery. Herein are all our cities pledged to each other to stand every siege, to dare the utmost, to endure every possible misery, yea, rather to set fire to all our homes, and be consumed with them into ashes together, than ever submit to the decrees of this cruel tyrant."

As Alva's administration drew to a close it was marked by disaster and disgrace on land and sea. The brilliant exploits by which he had struck terror into the heart of the Netherlanders, at Jemmingen and in Brabant, had been effaced by the valour of a handful of Hollanders, without discipline or experience. To the patriots, the opportune capture of so considerable a personage as Bossu, the admiral and governor of the northern province, was of great advantage. Such of the hostages from Haarlem as had not yet been executed now escaped with their lives. Moreover, Sainte-Aldegonde, the eloquent patriot and confidential friend of Orange, who was taken prisoner a few weeks later, in an action at Maeslandsuis, was preserved from inevitable destruction by the same cause. The prince hastened to assure the duke of Alva that the same measure would be dealt to Bossu as should be meted to Sainte-Aldegonde. It was, therefore, impossible for the governor-general to execute his prisoner, and he was obliged to submit to the vexation of seeing a leading rebel and heretic in his power, whom he dared not strike. Both the distinguished prisoners eventually regained their liberty.

#### THE RECALL OF ALVA (1573)

The duke was, doubtless, lower sunk in the estimation of all classes than he had ever been before, during his long and generally successful life. The reverses sustained by his army, the belief that his master had grown cold towards him, the certainty that his career in the Netherlands was closing without a satisfactory result, the natural weariness produced upon men's minds by the contemplation of so monotonous and unmitigated a tyranny during so many years, all contributed to diminish his reputation. He felt himself odious alike to princes and to plebeians. With his cabinet councillors he had long been upon unsatisfactory terms. President Tisnacq had died early in the summer, and Viglius, much against his will, had been induced, provisionally, to supply his place. But there was now hardly a pretence of friendship between the learned Frisian and the Governor. Each cordially detested the other.

The duke had contracted in Amsterdam an enormous amount of debt, both public and private. He accordingly, early in November, caused a proclamation to be made throughout the city by sound of trumpet, that all persons having demands upon him were to present their claims, in person, upon a specified day. During the night preceding the day so appointed, the duke and his train very noiselessly took their departure, without notice or beat of drum. By this masterly generalship his unhappy creditors were foiled upon the very eve of their anticipated triumph; the heavy accounts which had been contracted on the faith of the king and the governor remained for the most part unpaid, and many opulent and respectable families were reduced to beggary. Such was the consequence of the unlimited confidence which they had reposed in the honour of their tyrant.

On the 17th of November, 1573, Don Luis de Requesens y Cuñiga, grand commander of St. Iago, the appointed successor of Alva, arrived in Brussels, where he was received with great rejoicings. The duke, on the same day, wrote to the king "kissing his feet" for thus relieving him of his functions.

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On the 18th of December, 1573, the duke of Alva departed from the provinces forever. He had kept his bed for the greater part of the time during the last few weeks of his government — partly on account of his gout, partly to avoid being seen in his humiliation; but mainly, it was said, to escape the pressing demands of his creditors. He expressed a fear of travelling homeward through France, on the ground that he might very probably receive a shot out of a window as he went by. He complained pathetically that, after all his labours he had not “gained the approbation of the king,” while he had incurred “the malevolence and universal hatred of every individual in the country.”

On his journey from the Netherlands he is said to have boasted that he had caused eighteen thousand six hundred inhabitants of the provinces to be executed during the period of his government.<sup>1</sup> The number of those who had perished, by battle, siege, starvation, and massacre, defied computation. The duke was well received by his royal master, and remained in favour until a new adventure of Don Frederick brought father and son into disgrace. Having deceived and abandoned a maid of honour, he suddenly espoused his cousin, in order to avoid that reparation by marriage which was demanded for his offence. In consequence, both the duke and Don Frederick were imprisoned and banished, nor was Alva released till a general of experience was required for the conquest of Portugal. Thither, as it were with fetters on his legs, he went. After having accomplished the military enterprise entrusted to him, he fell into a lingering fever, at the termination of which he was so much reduced that he was only kept alive by milk, which he drank from a woman's breast. Such was the gentle second childhood of the man who had almost literally been drinking blood for seventy years. He died on the 12th of December, 1582.

## MOTLEY'S ESTIMATE OF ALVA

The duke's military fame was unquestionable when he came to the provinces, and both in stricken fields and in long campaigns he showed how thoroughly it had been deserved; yet he left the Netherlands a baffled man.

As a commander, therefore, he gained, upon the whole, no additional laurels during his long administration of the Netherlands. As a financier, he exhibited a wonderful ignorance of the first principles of political economy.

As an administrator of the civil and judicial affairs of the country, he at once reduced its institutions to a frightful simplicity. He strode with gigantic steps over haughty statutes and popular constitutions; crushing alike the magnates who claimed a bench of monarchs for their jury, and the ignoble artisans who could appeal only to the laws of their land. From the pompous and theatrical scaffolds of Egmont and Horn, to the nineteen halts prepared by Master Karl to hang up the chief bakers and brewers of Brussels on their own thresholds; from the beheading of the twenty nobles on the horse-market, in the opening of the governor's career, to the roasting alive of Uitenhoove at its close; from the block on which fell the honored head of Antony Straalen, to the obscure chair in which the ancient gentlewoman of Amsterdam suffered death for an act of vicarious mercy; from one year's end to another's; from the most signal to the most squalid scenes of sacrifice — the eye and hand

[<sup>1</sup> Gachard,\* after a close study of the documents, thinks that Alva boasted extravagantly and that the eighteen thousand victims of his Blood Council should be reduced to six or eight thousand. He adds grimly that “even the smaller number will suffice to justify the execration to which history has devoted the name of the duke of Alva.”]

of the great master directed, without weariness the task imposed by the sovereign.

With all the bloodshed at Mons, and Naarden, and Mechlin, and by the council of Tumults, daily, for six years long, still crying from the ground, he taxed himself with a misplaced and foolish tenderness to the people. He assured the king that when Alkmaar should be taken, he would not spare a "living soul among its whole population"; and, as his parting advice, he recommended that every city in the Netherlands should be burned to the ground, except a few which could be occupied permanently by the royal troops. On the whole, so finished a picture of a perfect and absolute tyranny has rarely been presented to mankind by history, as in Alva's administration of the Netherlands.

No mode in which human beings have ever caused their fellow creatures to suffer was omitted from daily practice. Men, women, and children, old and young, nobles and paupers, opulent burghers, hospital patients, lunatics, dead bodies, all were indiscriminately made to furnish food for the scaffold and the stake. Men were tortured, beheaded, hanged by the neck and by the legs, burned before slow fires, pinched to death with red-hot tongs, broken upon the wheel, starved, and flayed alive. Their skins, stripped from the living body, were stretched upon drums, to be beaten in the march of their brethren to the gallows. The bodies of many who had died a natural death were exhumed, and their festering remains hanged upon the gibbet, on pretext that they had died without receiving the sacrament, but in reality that their property might become the legitimate prey of the treasury.

Marriages of long standing were dissolved by order of government, that rich heiresses might be married against their will to foreigners whom they abhorred. Women and children were executed for the crime of assisting their fugitive husbands and parents with a penny in their utmost need, and even for consoling them with a letter in their exile. Such was the regular course of affairs as administered by the Blood Council. The additional barbarities committed amid the sack and ruin of those blazing and starving cities are almost beyond belief; unborn infants were torn from the living bodies of their mothers; women and children were violated by thousands; and whole populations burned and hacked to pieces by soldiers in every mode which cruelty, in its wanton ingenuity, could devise. Such was the administration, of which Vargas affirmed, at its close, that too much mercy, "*nimic misericordia*," had been its ruin.

The character of the duke of Alva, so far as the Netherlands are concerned, seems almost like a caricature. As a creation of fiction, it would seem grotesque: yet even that hardy, historical scepticism which delights in reversing the judgment of centuries, and in re-establishing reputations long since degraded to the dust, must find it difficult to alter this man's position. No historical decision is final; an appeal to a more remote posterity, founded upon more accurate evidence, is always valid: but when the verdict has been pronounced upon facts which are undisputed, and upon testimony from the criminal's lips, there is little chance of a reversal of the sentence.

The time is past when it could be said that the cruelty of Alva, or the enormities of his administration, have been exaggerated by party violence. Human invention is incapable of outstripping the truth upon this subject. To attempt the defence of either the man or his measures at the present day is to convict oneself of an amount of ignorance or of bigotry against which history and argument are alike powerless. The publication of the duke's letters in the correspondence of Simancas and in the Besançon papers,



together with that compact mass of horror long before the world under the title of *Sententien van Alva* in which a portion only of the sentences of death and banishment pronounced by him during his reign have been copied from the official records — these in themselves would be a sufficient justification of all the charges ever brought by the most bitter contemporary of Holland or Flanders. If the investigator should remain sceptical, however, let him examine the *Registre des Condamnés et Bannis à Cause des Troubles des Pays-Bas* in three, together with the Records of the *Conseil des Troubles*, in forty-three folio volumes, in the Royal Archives at Brussels. After going through all these chronicles of iniquity, the most determined historic doubter will probably throw up the case. It is an affectation of philosophical candour to extenuate vices which are not only avowed, but claimed as virtues.<sup>d</sup>

