



CHAPTER VII

PROGRESS TOWARDS UNION

[1578-1579 A.D.]

THE horrors of Alva's administration had caused men to look back with fondness upon the milder and more vacillating tyranny of the duchess Margaret. From the same cause the advent of the grand commander was hailed with pleasure and with a momentary gleam of hope.

Don Luis de Requesens and Cuñiga, grand commander of Castile and late governor of Milan, was a man of mediocre abilities, who possessed a reputation for moderation and sagacity which he hardly deserved. His military prowess had been chiefly displayed in the bloody and barren battle of Lepanto, where his conduct and counsel were supposed to have contributed, in some measure, to the victorious result. His administration at Milan had been characterised as firm and moderate. Nevertheless his character was regarded with anything but favourable eyes in the Netherlands. Men told each other of his broken faith to the Moors in Granada, and of his unpopularity in Milan, where, notwithstanding his boasted moderation, he had, in reality, so oppressed the people as to gain their deadly hatred. They complained, too, that it was an insult to send, as governor-general of the provinces, not a prince of the blood, as used to be the case, but a simple "gentleman of cloak and sword."

It was now evident to the world that the revolt had reached a stage in which it could be terminated only by absolute conquest or concession. The new governor accordingly, in case the Netherlanders would abandon every object for which they had been so heroically contending, was empowered to concede a pardon. It was expressly enjoined upon him, however, that no conciliatory measures should be adopted in which the king's absolute supremacy, and the total prohibition of every form of worship but the Roman Catholic, were not assumed as a basis. Now, as the people had been contending at least ten years long for constitutional rights against prerogative,

and at least seven for liberty of conscience against papistry, it was easy to foretell how much effect any negotiations thus commenced were likely to produce.

COST OF THE WAR

The rebellion had been an expensive matter to the Crown. The army in the Netherlands numbered more than sixty-two thousand men, eight thousand being Spaniards, the rest Walloons and Germans. Forty millions of dollars had already been sunk, and it seemed probable that it would require nearly the whole annual produce of the American mines to sustain the war. The transatlantic gold and silver, disinterred from the depths where they had been buried for ages, were employed, not to expand the current of a healthy, life-giving commerce, but to be melted into blood. The sweat and the tortures of the king's pagan subjects in the primeval forests of the New World were made subsidiary to the extermination of his Netherland people and the destruction of an ancient civilisation. To this end had Columbus discovered a hemisphere for Castile and Aragon, and the new Indies revealed their hidden treasures?

Forty millions of ducats had been spent. Six and a half millions of arreages were due to the army, while its current expenses were six hundred thousand a month. The military expenses alone of the Netherlands were accordingly more than seven millions of dollars yearly, and the mines of the New World produced, during the half-century of Philip's reign, an annual average of only eleven. Against this constantly-increasing deficit, there was not a stiver in the exchequer, nor the means of raising one. The tenth penny had been long virtually extinct, and was soon to be formally abolished. Confiscation had ceased to afford a permanent revenue, and the estates obstinately refused to grant a dollar. Such was the condition to which the unrelenting tyranny and the financial experiments of Alva had reduced the country. It was therefore obvious to Requesens that it would be useful at the moment to hold out hopes of pardon and reconciliation.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

It was, however, not possible to apply these hypocritical measures immediately. The war was in full career and could not be arrested even in that wintry season. The patriots held Mondragon closely besieged in Middelburg, the last point in the Isle of Walcheren which held for the king.¹ There was a considerable treasure in money and merchandise shut up in that city; and, moreover, so deserving and distinguished an officer as Mondragon could not be abandoned to his fate. At the same time, famine was pressing him sorely.

[¹ The Spanish garrison, under Mondragon, had now sustained a blockade of nearly two years, with a constancy and fidelity which the Hollanders themselves could not surpass. Don Sancho de Avila, admiral of the Spanish fleet, had from time to time been able to throw in supplies, but it was invariably a work of much danger and difficulty, and attended with heavy loss both of men and ships, the gueux being constantly victorious in the numerous skirmishes which occurred. The attempt to preserve Middelburg had cost the king of Spain no less a sum than 7,000,000 florins, besides the pay of the soldiers. The gueux (or, as they were usually called, "water-gueux"), on the other hand, had no regular fund to depend upon for either pay or subsistence, being chiefly supported by the inhabitants of the places where they anchored, who gave them bread, money, and such other necessaries as they could afford; when this resource failed, they went in chase of the merchant ships going to Flanders, and lived upon the booty they thus captured; sometimes, however, they were reduced to extreme scarcity, and even the highest officers were content to subsist for weeks together on nothing but salted herrings.—DAVIES.]

On the other hand, the situation of the patriots was not very encouraging. Their superiority on the sea was unquestionable, for the Hollanders and Zealanders were the best sailors in the world, and they asked of their country no payment for their blood but thanks. The land forces, however, were usually mercenaries, who were apt to mutiny at the commencement of an action if, as was too often the case, their wages could not be paid. Holland was entirely cut in twain by the loss of Haarlem and the leaguer of Leyden, no communication between the dissevered portions being possible, except with difficulty and danger. The states, although they had done much for the cause, and were prepared to do much more, were too apt to wrangle about economical details. They irritated the prince of Orange by huxtering about subsidies to a degree which he could hardly brook. He had strong hopes from France.^b

Requesens had first of all to purchase, by victories over the people, the right to offer them peace. He fitted out at Antwerp and at Bergen-op-Zoom an expedition against the Zealand islands. But the indefatigable Boisot headed it off, attacked the fleet from Bergen-op-Zoom before it could effect a junction with the other, and captured a majority of the ships (January, 1574); Middelburg surrendered February 18th. This defeat, which would have discouraged a less able leader, did not stop Requesens.

The bulk of his troops was assembled on the banks of the Schelde awaiting transportation to Zealand. He led them in the direction of the Maas, whither he summoned at the same time the division encamped before Leyden; and thus, placing himself at the head of his entire body of troops, he set out to meet a German army which the prince of Orange was awaiting. This army, ten thousand men strong, had just crossed Limburg under the leadership of Counts Louis and Henry of Nassau. The governor came upon them above Nimeguen on a wide plain known as the Mooker Heath or Mookerheyde. He offered them battle; and the two counts, who accepted it, were disastrously defeated and included in the number of dead. (April 15th, 1574.)

After having re-established by this success the honour of his arms, the governor had to contend, for a time, with mutiny among his soldiers. The Spaniards, to whom twenty-eight months' pay was owing, rebelled against their officers, elected a chief called an *eletto*, and marched upon Antwerp, where the garrison permitted them to enter the town. They were threatening to sack the city when Requesens succeeded in pacifying them by distributing all the money he could get out of the citizens or borrow elsewhere among them. He even pawned his own plate. He then led his men to Leyden and recommenced the siege of that place¹ with such vigour that its inhabitants were soon reduced to the last extremity.

Requesens resolved to convoke the provincial states in order to obtain further subsidies and ask the king for a fleet powerful enough to attain the mastery of the sea. Philip, in truth, did order a fleet to be sent, but an epidemic made such ravages among the sailors that the ships could not sail. As to the states, they assembled at Brussels, May, 1574; but although the governor made them, in the king's name, several important concessions — general and unreserved amnesty, abolition of the new taxes, and suppression of the council of Troubles — yet the public discontent wanted a more extended satisfaction. They demanded the retirement of the foreigners and repression of "the extortions and pillaging" of the soldiers, who treated the king's subjects as "poor slaves and infidels." This was an allusion to the

[¹ In the mean while Admiral Boisot had found and defeated a Spanish fleet of twenty-two ships off Antwerp, sinking fourteen of them and taking Vice-Admiral Haemstede prisoner.]

[1573-1574 A. D.]

cruelties of the Spaniards in America. Besides this they called for the restoration of ignored and broken privileges, and some agreement with the provinces which had taken up arms. The deputies, taken aside one after another, proved inflexible. They refused to vote the money, and the governor got nothing from them but complaints and remonstrances. Such was the bitterness of the language that Requesens was affrighted at the ferment they raised. "God preserve us," he exclaimed, "from such estates!" For a moment he seemed to despair of the future. Nevertheless, he made a sufficiently favourable response to the demands he had received, and obtained a promise of the subsidy.^d

THE SIEGE OF LEYDEN

The invasion of Louis of Nassau had, as already stated, effected the raising of the first siege of Leyden. That leaguer had lasted from the 31st of October, 1573, to the 21st of March, 1574. By an extraordinary and culpable carelessness, the citizens, neglecting the advice of the prince, had not taken advantage of the breathing time thus afforded them to victual the city and strengthen the garrison. On the 26th of May, Valdez reappeared before the place, at the head of eight thousand Walloons and Germans.

In the course of a few days Leyden was thoroughly invested, no less than sixty-two redoubts, some of them having remained undestroyed from the previous siege, now girdling the city. On the other hand, there were no troops in the town, save a small corps of "freebooters," and five companies of the burgher guard. The main reliance of the city was on the stout hearts of its inhabitants within the walls, and on the sleepless energy of William the Silent without. The prince implored them to hold out at least three months, assuring them that he would, within that time, devise the means of their deliverance.

It was now thought expedient to publish the amnesty which had been so long in preparation, and this time the trap was more liberally baited. The pardon, which had passed the seals upon the 8th of March, was formally issued by the grand commander on the 6th of June. By the terms of this document the king invited all his erring and repentant subjects to return to his arms, and to accept a full forgiveness for their past offences, upon the sole condition that they should once more throw themselves upon the bosom of the Mother Church.

It was received with universal and absolute contempt. No man came forward to take advantage of its conditions, save one brewer in Utrecht, and the son of a refugee peddler from Leyden. With these exceptions, the only ones recorded, Holland remained deaf to the royal voice although certain Netherlanders belonging to the king's party, and familiarly called "Glippers," despatched from the camp many letters to their rebellious acquaintances in the city. In these epistles the citizens of Leyden were urgently and even pathetically exhorted to submission.

The prince had his headquarters at Delft and at Rotterdam. He still held in his hand the keys with which he could unlock the ocean gates and let the waters in upon the land, and he had long been convinced that nothing could save the city but to break the dikes. Leyden was not upon the sea, but he could send the sea to Leyden, although an army fit to encounter the besieging force under Valdez could not be levied. The damage to the fields, villages, and growing crops would be enormous; but he felt that no other course could rescue Leyden, and with it the whole of Holland, from destruction.

[1574 A.D.]

His clear expositions and impassioned eloquence at last overcame all resistance. By the middle of July the states fully consented to his plan, and its execution was immediately undertaken.

"Better a drowned land than a lost land," cried the patriots, with enthusiasm, as they devoted their fertile fields to desolation. The enterprise for restoring their territory, for a season, to the waves from which it had been so patiently rescued, was conducted with as much regularity as if it had been a profitable undertaking. A capital was formally subscribed, for which a certain number of bonds were issued, payable at a long date. In addition to this preliminary fund, a monthly allowance of forty-five guildens was voted by the states, until the work should be completed, and a large sum was contributed by the ladies of the land, who freely furnished their plate, jewelry, and costly furniture to the furtherance of the scheme.

On the 3rd of August, the prince, accompanied by Paul Buys, chief of the commission appointed to execute the enterprise, went in person, and superintended the rupture of the dikes in sixteen places. The gates at Schiedam and Rotterdam were opened, and the ocean began to pour over the land. While waiting for the waters to rise, provisions were rapidly collected, according to an edict of the prince, in all the principal towns of the neighbourhood. The citizens of Leyden were, however, already becoming impatient, for their bread was gone. They received on the 21st of August a letter, dictated by the prince, who now lay in bed at Rotterdam with a violent fever, assuring them that the dikes were all pierced, and that the water was rising.

In the city itself, a dull distrust succeeded to the first vivid gleam of hope, while the few royalists among the population boldly taunted their fellow citizens to their faces with the absurd vision of relief which they had so fondly welcomed. "Go up to the tower, ye beggars," was the frequent and taunting cry — "go up to the tower, and tell us if ye can see the ocean coming over the dry land to your relief."

The fever of the prince had, meanwhile, reached its height. He lay at Rotterdam, utterly prostrate in body, and with mind agitated nearly to delirium, by the perpetual and almost unassisted schemes which he was constructing. Never was illness more unseasonable. His attendants were in despair, for it was necessary that his mind should for a time be spared the agitation of business. But from his sick bed he continued to dictate words of counsel and encouragement to the city; to Admiral Boisot, commanding the fleet, minute directions and precautions.

By the end of the first week of September, he wrote a long letter to his brother, assuring him of his convalescence and expressing, as usual, a calm confidence in the divine decrees. The preparations for the relief of Leyden, which, notwithstanding his exertions, had grown slack during his sickness, were now vigorously resumed. On the 1st of September, Admiral Boisot arrived out of Zealand with a small number of vessels, and with eight hundred veteran sailors. A wild and ferocious crew were those eight hundred Zealanders. Scarred, hacked, and even maimed, in the unceasing conflicts in which their lives had passed; wearing crescents in their caps, with the inscription, "Rather Turkish than popish"; renowned far and wide, as much for their ferocity as for their nautical skill — the appearance of these wildest of the "sea-beggars" was both eccentric and terrific. They were known never to give nor to take quarter, for they went to mortal combat only, and had sworn to spare neither noble nor simple, neither king, kaiser, nor pope, should they fall into their power.

[1574 A.D.]

More than two hundred vessels had been now assembled, carrying generally ten pieces of cannon, with from ten to eighteen oars, and manned with twenty-five hundred veterans, experienced both on land and water. The work was now undertaken in earnest. The distance from Leyden to the outer dike, over whose ruins the ocean had already been admitted, was nearly fifteen miles. This reclaimed territory, however, was not maintained against the sea by these external barriers alone. The flotilla made its way with ease to the Land-scheiding, a strong dike within five miles of Leyden; but here its progress was arrested. It was necessary to break through a twofold series of defences.

The prince had given orders that the Land-scheiding, which was still one and a half feet above water, should be taken possession of, at every hazard. On the night of the 10th and 11th of September this was accomplished, by surprise, and in a masterly manner. No time was lost in breaking it through in several places, a work which was accomplished under the very eyes of the enemy. The fleet sailed through the gaps; but, after their passage had been effected in good order, the admiral found, to his surprise, that it was not the only rampart to be carried.

The Green-way, another long dike, three-quarters of a mile further inward, now rose at least a foot above the water, to oppose their further progress. Promptly and audaciously Admiral Boisot took possession of this barrier also, levelled it in many places, and brought his flotilla, in triumph, over its ruins. Again, however, he was doomed to disappointment. A large mere, called the Fresh-water Lake, was known to extend itself directly in his path about midway between the Land-scheiding and the city. To this piece of water, into which he had expected to float instantly, his only passage lay through one deep canal. The sea which had thus far borne him on, now diffusing itself over a very wide surface, and under the influence of an adverse wind, had become too shallow for his ships. The canal alone was deep enough, but it led directly towards a bridge, strongly occupied by the enemy. Hostile troops, moreover, to the amount of three thousand, occupied both sides of the canal. The bold Boisot, nevertheless, determined to force his passage, if possible. After losing a few men, and ascertaining the impregnable position of the enemy, he was obliged to withdraw, defeated and almost despairing. A week had elapsed since the great dike had been pierced, and the flotilla now lay motionless in shallow water, having accomplished less than two miles. The wind, too, was easterly, causing the sea rather to sink than to rise. Everything wore a gloomy aspect, when, fortunately, on the 18th, the wind shifted to the northwest, and for three days blew a gale. The waters rose rapidly, and before the second day was closed the armada was afloat again. Some fugitives from Zoetermeer village now arrived, and informed the admiral that, by making a detour to the right, he could completely circumvent the bridge and the mere. They guided him, accordingly, to a comparatively low dike, which led between the villages of Zoetermeer and Benthuizen. A strong force of Spaniards was stationed in each place, but seized with a panic they fled inwardly towards Leyden, and halted at the village of North Aa.

The fleet was delayed at North Aa by another barrier, called the "Kirkway." The waters, too, spreading once more over a wider space, and diminishing under an east wind, which had again arisen, no longer permitted their progress; so that very soon the whole armada was stranded anew. The waters fell to the depth of nine inches, while the vessels required eighteen and twenty.

Meantime, the besieged city was at its last gasp. At the dawn of each day every eye was turned wistfully to the vanes of the steeples. So long as the easterly breeze prevailed, they felt, as they anxiously stood on towers and housetops, that they must look in vain for the welcome ocean. Even the misery endured at Haarlem had not reached that depth and intensity of agony to which Leyden was now reduced.

The pestilence stalked at noonday through the city, and the doomed inhabitants fell like grass beneath its scythe. From six thousand to eight thousand human beings sank before this scourge alone, yet the people resolutely held out. Leyden was sublime in its despair. A few murmurs were, however, occasionally heard at the steadfastness of the magistrates, and a dead body was placed at the door of the burgomaster, as a silent witness against his inflexibility. A party of the more faint-hearted even assailed the heroic Pieter Adriaanszoon van der Werff with threats and reproaches as he passed through the streets. He waved his broad-leaved felt hat for silence, and then exclaimed, in language which has been almost literally preserved:

"What would ye, my friends? Why do ye murmur that we do not break our vows and surrender the city to the Spaniards — a fate more horrible than the agony which she now endures? I tell you I have made an oath to hold the city, and may God give me strength to keep my oath! I can die but once; whether by your hands, the enemy's, or by the hand of God; my life is at your disposal: here is my sword, plunge it into my breast, and divide my flesh among you. Take my body to appease your hunger, but expect no surrender, so long as I remain alive."

The words of the stout burgomaster inspired a new courage. From the ramparts they hurled renewed defiance at the enemy. "Ye call us rat-eaters and dog-eaters," they cried, "and it is true. So long, then, as ye hear dog bark or cat mew within the walls, ye may know that the city holds out. And when all has perished but ourselves, be sure that we will each devour our left arms, retaining our right to defend our women, our liberty, and our religion, against the foreign tyrant. When the last hour has come, with our hands we will set fire to the city, and perish, men, women, and children together, in the flames, rather than suffer our homes to be polluted and our liberties to be crushed."

"As well," shouted the Spaniards, derisively, to the citizens, "as well can the prince of Orange pluck the stars from the sky as bring the ocean to the walls of Leyden."

A violent equinoctial gale, on the night of the 1st and 2nd of October, came storming from the northwest, shifting after a few hours full eight points, and then blowing still more violently from the southwest. The waters of the North Sea were piled in vast masses upon the southern coast of Holland, and then dashed furiously landward, the ocean rising over the earth, and sweeping with unrestrained power across the ruined dikes. The Kirk-way, which had been broken through according to the prince's instructions, was now completely overflowed, and the fleet sailed at midnight, in the midst of the storm and darkness. There was a fierce naval midnight battle — a strange spectacle among the branches of those quiet orchards, and with the chimney stacks of half-submerged farm-houses rising around the contending vessels. The enemy's vessels were soon sunk, their crews hurled into the waves.

As they approached some shallows, which led into the great mere, the Zealanders dashed into the sea, and with sheer strength shouldered every vessel through. The panic, which had hitherto driven their foes before the

[1574 A.D.]

advancing patriots, had reached Zoeterwoude. The Spaniards, in the early morning, poured out from the fortress, and fled precipitately. Their narrow path was rapidly vanishing in the waves, and hundreds sank beneath the constantly-deepening and treacherous flood. The wild Zealanders, too, sprang from their vessels upon the crumbling dike and drove their retreating foes into the sea. They hurled their harpoons at them, with an accuracy acquired in many a polar chase; they plunged into the waves in the keen pursuit, attacking them with boat-hook and dagger.

A few strokes of the oars brought the whole fleet close to Lammen. This last obstacle rose formidable and frowning directly across their path. Swarming as it was with soldiers, and bristling with artillery, it seemed to defy the armada either to carry it by storm or to pass under its guns into the city. Boisot anchored his fleet within a respectful distance, and spent what remained of the day in carefully reconnoitring.

Night descended upon the scene, a pitch dark night, full of anxiety to the Spaniards, to the armada, to Leyden. Strange sights and sounds occurred at different moments to bewilder the anxious sentinels. A long procession of lights issuing from the fort was seen to flit across the black face of the waters, in the dead of night, and the whole of the city wall, between the Cow-gate and the tower of Burgundy, fell with a loud crash.¹ The horror-struck citizens thought that the Spaniards were upon them at last; the Spaniards imagined the noise to indicate a desperate sortie of the citizens. Everything was vague and mysterious. Day dawned, at length, after the feverish night, and the admiral prepared for the assault. Suddenly a man was descried, wading breast-high through the water from Lammen towards the fleet; while, at the same time, one solitary boy was seen to wave his cap from the summit of the fort. After a moment of doubt, the happy mystery was solved. The Spaniards had fled, panic-struck, during the darkness. All obstacles being now removed, the fleet of Boisot swept by Lammen, and entered the city on the morning of the 3rd of October. Leyden was relieved.

The quays were lined with the famishing population, as the fleet rowed through the canals, every human being who could stand coming forth to greet the preservers of the city. Bread was thrown from every vessel among the crowd. The poor creatures who for two months had tasted no wholesome human food, and who had literally been living within the jaws of death, snatched eagerly the blessed gift, at last too liberally bestowed. Many choked themselves to death, in the greediness with which they devoured their bread. Magistrates and citizens, wild Zealanders, emaciated burgher guards, sailors, soldiers, women, children — nearly every living person within the walls all repaired without delay to the great church, stout Admiral Boisot leading the way. After prayers, the whole vast congregation joined in the thanksgiving hymn. Thousands of voices raised the song, but few were able to carry it to its conclusion, for the universal emotion, deepened by the music, became too full for utterance. The hymn was abruptly suspended, while the multitude wept like children.

On the 4th of October, the day following that on which the relief of the city was effected, the wind shifted to the northeast, and again blew a tempest. It was as if the waters, having now done their work, had been rolled back to the ocean by an omnipotent hand; for in the course of a few days the land was bare again, and the work of reconstructing the dikes commenced.

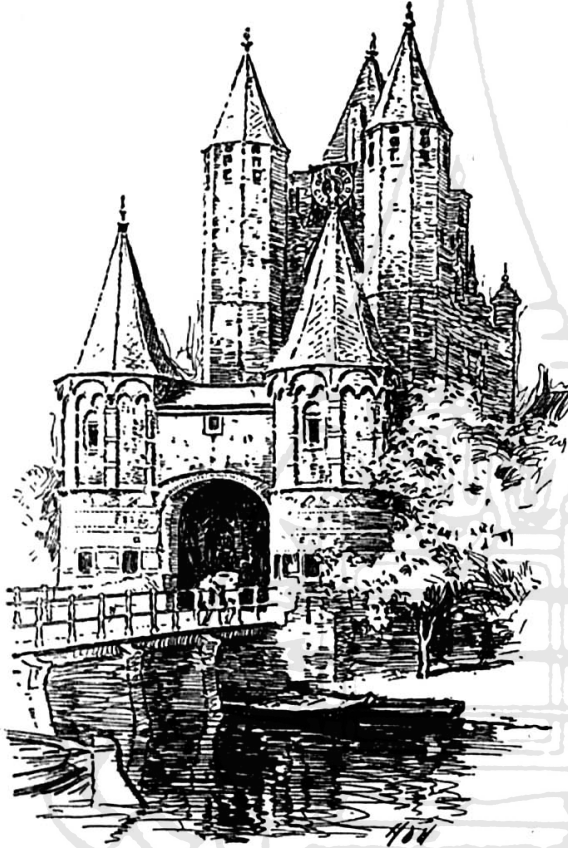
After a brief interval of repose, Leyden had regained its former position.

[¹ According to Hofdyk the fallen portion was only sixteen feet wide.]

[1574 A. D.]

The prince, with advice of the states, had granted the city, as a reward for its sufferings, a ten days' annual fair, without tolls or taxes; and, as a further manifestation of the gratitude entertained by the people of Holland and Zealand for the heroism of the citizens, it was resolved that an academy or university should be forthwith established within their walls. The University of Leyden, afterwards so illustrious, was thus founded in the very darkest period of the country's struggle.

The document by which the institution was founded was certainly a masterpiece of ponderous irony, for as the fiction of the king's sovereignty was still maintained, Philip was gravely made to establish the university, as a reward to Leyden for rebellion to himself.



OLD AMSTERDAM GATE, HAARLEM

THE STADHOLDER'S POWERS ENLARGED

Changes fast becoming necessary in the internal government of the provinces were undertaken during 1574. Hitherto the prince had exercised his power under the convenient fiction of the monarch's authority, systematically conducting the rebellion in the name of his majesty, and as his majesty's stadholder. By this process an immense power was lodged in his hands; nothing less, indeed, than the supreme executive and legislative functions of the land.

The two provinces, even while deprived of Haarlem and Amsterdam, now raised 210,000 florins monthly, whereas Alva had never been able to extract from Holland more than 271,000 florins yearly. In consequence of this liberality, the cities insensibly acquired a greater influence in the government. Moreover, while growing more ambitious, they became less liberal.

The prince, dissatisfied with the conduct of the cities, brought the whole subject before an assembly of the states of Holland, on the 20th of October, 1574. He stated the inconveniences produced by the anomalous condition of the government. He complained that the common people had often fallen into the error that the money raised for public purposes had been levied for his benefit only, and that they had, therefore, been less willing to contribute to the taxes. As the only remedy for these evils, he tendered his

[1574-1575 A.D.]

resignation of all the powers with which he was clothed, so that the estates might then take the government, which they could exercise without conflict or control. For himself, he had never desired power, except as a means of being useful to his country, and he did not offer his resignation from unwillingness to stand by the cause, but from a hearty desire to save it from disputes among its friends. He was ready now, as ever, to shed the last drop of his blood to maintain the freedom of the land.

This straightforward language produced an instantaneous effect. They were embarrassed, for they did not like to relinquish the authority which they had begun to relish, nor to accept the resignation of a man who was indispensable. They felt that to give up William of Orange at that time was to accept the Spanish yoke forever. At an assembly held at Delft on the 12th of November, 1574, they accordingly requested him "to continue in his blessed government, with the council established near him," and for this end they formally offered to him, "under the name of governor or regent," absolute power, authority, and sovereign command. But they made it a condition that the states should be convened and consulted upon requests, impositions, and upon all changes in the governing body. It was also stipulated that the judges of the supreme court and of the exchequer, with other high officers, should be appointed by and with the consent of the states.

The prince expressed himself as willing to accept the government upon these terms. He, however, demanded an allowance of 45,000 florins monthly for the army expenses and other current outlays. Here, however, the states refused their consent. In a mercantile spirit, unworthy the occasion and the man with whom they were dealing, they endeavoured to chaffer where they should have been only too willing to comply, and they attempted to reduce the reasonable demand of the prince to 30,000 florins. The prince denounced the niggardliness of the states in the strongest language, and declared that he would rather leave the country forever, with the maintenance of his own honour, than accept the government upon such disgraceful terms. The states, disturbed by his vehemence, and struck with its justice, instantly, and without further deliberation, consented to his demand. They granted the forty-five thousand florins monthly, and the prince assumed the government, thus remodelled.

During the autumn and early winter of the year 1574, the emperor Maximilian had been actively exerting himself to bring about a pacification of the Netherlands. Ten commissioners, who were appointed by the states for peace negotiations, were all friends of the prince. Among them were Sainte-Aldegonde, Paul Buys, Charles Boisot, and Doctor Junius. The plenipotentiaries of the Spanish government were Leoninus, the seigneur de Rassinghem, Cornelius Suis, and Arnold Sasbout.

The proceedings were opened at Breda upon the 3rd of March, 1575. They ended July 13th, with nothing accomplished. The internal government of the insurgent provinces had remained upon the footing which we have seen established in the autumn of 1574, but in the course of this summer (1575), however, the foundation was laid for the union of Holland and Zealand, under the authority of Orange. The selfish principle of municipal aristocracy, which had tended to keep asunder these various groups of cities, was now repressed by the energy of the prince and the strong determination of the people.

On the 4th of June this first union was solemnised. Upon the 11th of July, the prince formally accepted the government. Early in this year the prince had despatched Sainte-Aldegonde on a private mission to the elector

palatine. During some of his visits to that potentate he had seen at Heidelberg the princess Charlotte of Bourbon, daughter of the duke of Montpensier, the most ardent of the Catholic princes of France. A woman of beauty, intelligence, and virtue, forced before the canonical age to take the religious vows, she had been placed in the convent of Jouarre, of which she had become abbess. Always secretly inclined to the Reformed religion, she had fled secretly from her cloister, in the year of horrors 1572, and had found refuge at the court of the elector palatine, after which step her father refused to receive her letters, to contribute a farthing to her support, or even to acknowledge her claims upon him by a single line or message of affection.

Under these circumstances the outcast princess, who had arrived at years of maturity, might be considered her own mistress, and she was neither morally nor legally bound, when her hand was sought in marriage by the great champion of the Reformation, to ask the consent of a parent who loathed her religion, and denied her existence. The legality of the divorce from Anna of Saxony had been settled by a full expression of the ecclesiastical authority which she most respected; the facts upon which the divorce had been founded having been proved beyond peradventure.

So far, therefore, as the character of Mademoiselle Bourbon and the legitimacy of her future offspring were concerned, she received ample guarantees. For the rest, the prince, in a simple letter, informed her that he was already past his prime, having reached his forty-second year, and that his fortune was encumbered not only with settlements for his children by previous marriages, but by debts contracted in the cause of his oppressed country. A convention of doctors and bishops of France, summoned by the duke of Montpensier, afterwards confirmed the opinion that the conventional vows of the princess Charlotte had been conformable neither to the laws of France nor to the canons of the Trent Council. She was conducted to Briel by Sainte-Aldegonde, where she was received by her bridegroom, to whom she was united on the 12th of June. The wedding festival was held at Dort with much revelry and holiday-making, "but without dancing."

In this connection, no doubt the prince consulted his inclination only. It was equally natural that he should make many enemies by so impolitic a match.

While these important affairs, public and private, had been occurring in the south of Holland and in Germany, a very nefarious transaction had disgraced the cause of the patriot party in the northern quarter. Diedrich Sonoy, governor of that portion of Holland, a man of great bravery, but of extreme ferocity of character, had discovered an extensive conspiracy among certain of the inhabitants, in aid of an approaching Spanish invasion. The governor, determined to show that the duke of Alva could not be more prompt nor more terrible than himself, improvised, of his own authority, a tribunal in imitation of the infamous Blood Council. Fortunately for the character of the country, Sonoy was not a Hollander, nor was the jurisdiction of this newly established court allowed to extend beyond very narrow limits. Eight vagabonds were, however, arrested and doomed to tortures the most horrible, in order to extort from them confessions implicating persons of higher position in the land than themselves. The individuals who had been thus designated were arrested. Charged with plotting a general conflagration of the villages and farm-houses, in conjunction with an invasion by Hierges and other Papist generals, they indignantly protested their innocence; but two of them, a certain Kopp Corneliszoon, and his son, Nanning Koppezoon, were selected to undergo the most cruel torture which had yet been practised in the Netherlands.

[1575 A. D.]

It was shown that Reformers were capable of giving a lesson even to inquisitors in this diabolical science. The affair now reached the ears of Orange. His peremptory orders, with the universal excitement produced in the neighbourhood, at last checked the course of the outrage. It is no impeachment upon the character of the prince that these horrible crimes were not prevented. It was impossible for him to be omnipresent. Neither is it just to consider the tortures and death thus inflicted upon innocent men an indelible stain upon the cause of liberty. They were the crimes of an individual who had been useful, but who, like the count de la Marck, had now contaminated his hand with the blood of the guiltless. The new tribunal never took root, and was abolished as soon as its initiatory horrors were known.

A SPANISH EXPLOIT

The grand commander had not yet given up the hope of naval assistance from Spain, notwithstanding the abrupt termination to the last expedition which had been organised. It was, however, necessary that a foothold should be recovered upon the seaboard, before a descent from without could be met with proper co-operation from the land forces within, and he was most anxious, therefore, to effect the reconquest of some portion of Zealand. Traitors from Zealand itself now came forward to teach the Spanish commander how to strike at the heart of their own country. These refugees explained to Requesens that a narrow flat extended under the sea from Philipsland, as far as the shore of Duiveland. A force sent through these dangerous shallows might take possession of Duiveland and lay siege to Zieriksee in the very teeth of the Zealand fleet, which would be unable to sail near enough to intercept their passage.

Requesens assembled three thousand infantry, partly Spaniards, partly Germans, partly Walloons, besides a picked corps of two hundred sappers and miners. One half was to remain in boats, under the command of Mondragon; the other half, accompanied by two hundred pioneers, to wade through the sea from Philipsland to Duiveland and Schouwen. Each soldier of this detachment was provided with a pair of shoes, two pounds of powder, and rations for three days, in a canvas bag suspended at his neck. The leader of this expedition was Don Osorio de Ulloa. It was a wild night, the 27th of September. Incessant lightning alternately revealed and obscured the progress of the midnight march through the black waters.

As they advanced cautiously, two by two, the daring adventurers found themselves soon nearly up to their necks in the waves, while so narrow was the submerged bank along which they were marching, that a mis-step to the right or left was fatal. Luckless individuals repeatedly sank to rise no more. Meantime, as the sickly light of the waning moon came forth at intervals through the stormy clouds, the soldiers could plainly perceive the files of Zealand vessels through which they were to march, and which were anchored as close to the flat as the water would allow.

Standing breast-high in the waves, and surrounded at intervals by total darkness, they were yet able to pour an occasional well-directed volley into the hostile ranks. The Zealanders, however, did not assail them with fire-arms alone. They transfixed some with their fatal harpoons; they dragged others from the path with boat-hooks; they beat out the brains of others with heavy flails.

The night wore on, and the adventurers still fought it out manfully, but very slowly, the main body of Spaniards, Germans, and Walloons, soon after

daylight, reaching the opposite shore, having sustained considerable losses, but in perfect order. The pioneers were not so fortunate. The tide rose over them before they could effect their passage, and swept nearly every one away. The rear-guard were fortunately enabled to retrace their steps.

Don Osorio, at the head of the successful adventurers, now effected his landing upon Duiveland. Reposing themselves but for an instant after this unparalleled march through the water, of more than six hours, they took a slight refreshment, prayed to the Virgin Mary and to St. James, and then prepared to meet their new enemies on land. Ter companies of French, Scotch, and English auxiliaries lay in Duiveland, under the command of Charles van Boisot. Strange to relate, by an inexplicable accident, or by treason, that general was slain by his own soldiers, at the moment when the royal troops landed. The panic created by this event became intense, as the enemy rose suddenly, as it were, out of the depths of the ocean to attack them. They magnified the numbers of their assailants, and fled terror-stricken in every direction. The city of Zieriksee was soon afterwards beleaguered.

The siege was protracted till the following June, the city holding out with firmness. Want of funds caused the operations to be conducted with languor, but the same cause prevented the prince from accomplishing it in relief. Thus the expedition from Philipsland, the most brilliant military exploit of the whole war, was attended with important results. The communication between Walcheren and the rest of Zeeland was interrupted, the province cut in two, a foot-hold on the ocean, for a brief interval at least, acquired by Spain. The prince was inexpressibly chagrined by these circumstances, and felt that the moment had arrived when all honourable means were to be employed to obtain foreign assistance.

INDEPENDENCE DECLARED (1575)

Hitherto the fiction of allegiance had been preserved, and, even by the enemies of the prince, it was admitted that it had been retained with no disloyal intent. The time, however, had come when it was necessary to throw off allegiance, provided another could be found strong enough and frank enough to accept the authority which Philip had forfeited. The question was, naturally, between France and England, unless the provinces could effect their re-admission into the body of the German Empire.

The states were summoned by the prince, to deliberate on this important matter, at Rotterdam. On the 1st of October he formally proposed either to make terms with their enemy (and that the sooner the better), or else, once for all, to separate entirely from the king of Spain, and to change their sovereign. After an adjournment of a few days, the diet again assembled at Delft, and it was then unanimously resolved by the nobles and the cities, that they would forsake the king and seek foreign assistance; referring the choice to the prince, who, in regard to the government, was to take the opinion of the states.

Thus the great step was taken, by which two little provinces declared themselves independent of their ancient master. That declaration, although taken in the midst of doubt and darkness, was not destined to be cancelled, and the germ of a new and powerful commonwealth was planted. So little, however, did these republican fathers foresee their coming republic, that the resolution to renounce one king was combined with a proposition to ask for the authority of another. It was not imagined that those two slender

[1576 A.D.]

columns, which were all that had yet been raised of the future stately peristyle, would be strong enough to stand alone.

Germany, England, France, however, all refused to stretch out their hands to save the heroic but exhaustless little provinces. It was at this moment that a desperate but sublime resolution took possession of the prince's mind. There seemed but one way left to exclude the Spaniards forever from Holland and Zealand, and to rescue the inhabitants from impending ruin. The prince had long brooded over the scheme, and the hour seemed to have struck for its fulfilment. His project was to collect all the vessels, of every description, which could be obtained throughout the Netherlands. The whole population of the two provinces, men, women, and children, together with all the movable property of the country, were then to be embarked on board this numerous fleet, and to seek a new home beyond the seas. The windmills were then to be burned, the dikes pierced, the sluices opened in every direction, and the country restored forever to the ocean, from which it had sprung.¹

It is difficult to say whether the resolution, if providence had permitted its fulfilment, would have been, on the whole, better or worse for humanity and civilisation. The ships which would have borne the prince and his fortunes might have taken the direction of the newly discovered western hemisphere. A religious colony, planted by a commercial and liberty-loving race, in a virgin soil, and directed by patrician but self-denying hands, might have preceded, by half a century, the colony which a kindred race, impelled by similar motives, and under somewhat similar circumstances and conditions, was destined to plant upon the stern shores of New England. Had they directed their course to the warm and fragrant islands of the East, an independent Christian commonwealth might have arisen among those prolific regions, superior in importance to any subsequent colony of Holland, cramped from its birth by absolute subjection to a far-distant metropolis.

DEATH OF REQUESENS (1576)

The unexpected death of Requesens suddenly dispelled these schemes. A violent fever seized him on the 1st, and terminated his existence on the 5th of March, in the fifty-first year of his life.

Requesens was a man of high position by birth and office, but a thoroughly commonplace personage. His talents either for war or for civil employments were not above mediocrity. His sudden death arrested, for a moment, the ebb-tide in the affairs of the Netherlands, which was fast leaving the country bare and desolate, and was followed by a train of unforeseen transactions.

THE RISE OF FLANDERS AND BRABANT

The suddenness of Requesens' illness had not allowed time for even the nomination of a successor, to which he was authorised by letters patent from

¹ Borſ relates that this plan had been definitely formed by the prince. His authority is "a credible gentleman of quality" (*een geloofswaerdig edelmann van qualiteit*) who, at the time, was a member of the estates and government of Holland. Groen van Prinsterer, however, rejects the tale as fabulous; or believes, at any rate, that the personage alluded to by Bor took the prince's words too literally. It is probable that the thought was often in the prince's mind, and found occasional expression, although it had never been actually reduced to a scheme. It is difficult to see that it was not consistent with his character, supposing that there had been no longer any room for hope. Hooft adopts the story without hesitation. Vagenaar alludes to it as a matter of current report.

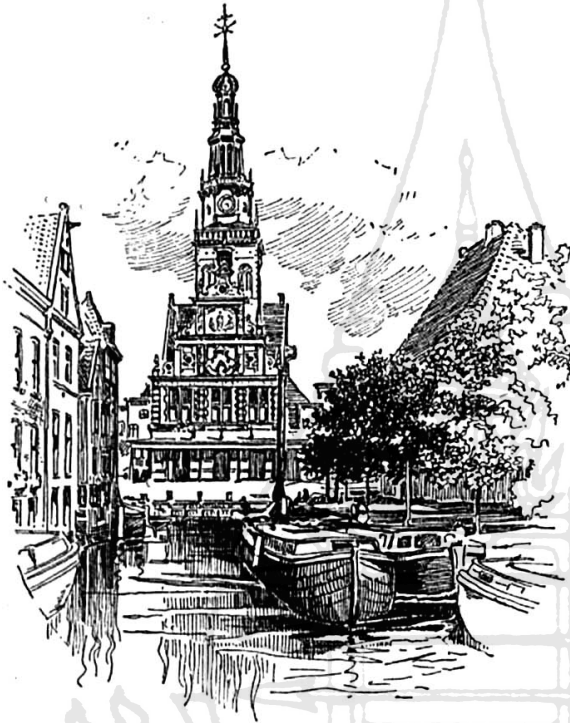
[1576 A.D.]

the king. The government now devolved entirely into the hands of the council of state, which was at that period composed of nine members. The principal of these was Philip de Croy duke of Aerschot; the other leading members were Viglius, counts Mansfeld and Barlaymont; and the council was degraded by numbering, among the rest, Debris and De Roda, two of the notorious Spaniards who had formed part of the council of Blood.

The king resolved to leave the authority in the hands of this incongruous mixture, until the arrival of Don John of Austria, his natural brother, whom he had already named to the office of governor-general. But in the interval

the government assumed an aspect of unprecedented disorder, and widespread anarchy embraced the whole country. The royal troops openly revolted, and fought against each other like deadly enemies. The nobles, divided in their views, arrogated to themselves in different places the titles and powers of command.

The siege of Zieriksee was continued; but speedy dissensions among the members of the government rendered their authority contemptible, if not utterly extinct, in the eyes of the people. The exhaustion of the treasury deprived them of all power to put an end to the mutinous excesses of the Spanish troops, and the latter carried their licentiousness to the utmost bounds. Zieriksee, admitted to a



MARKET-PLACE AND BELL-TOWER AT ALKMAAR

surrender,¹ and saved from pillage by the payment of a large sum, was lost to the royalists within three months, from the want of discipline in its garrison; and the towns and burghs of Brabant suffered as much from the excesses of their nominal protectors as could have been inflicted by the enemy. The mutineers at length, to the number of some thousands, attacked and carried by force the town of Alost² [or Aalst]; imprisoned the chief citizens; and levied contributions on all the country round. It was then that the council of state found itself forced to proclaim them rebels, traitors, and enemies to the king and the country, and called on all loyal subjects to pursue and exterminate them wherever they were found in arms.

This proscription of the Spanish mutineers was followed by the convo-

[¹ The brave admiral Louis Boisot was killed while attempting to relieve the town, which surrendered June 21st, 1576.]

[² According to Blok the soldiers congregated at Alost in such numbers as to leave Holland, Zealand, Gelderland, and Utrecht almost free of foreign soldiery.]

[1576 A.D.]

cation of the *Estates-generals*; and the government thus hoped to maintain some show of union, and some chance of authority. But a new scene of intestine violence completed the picture of executive inefficiency. On the 4th of September, the grand bailiff of Brabant, as lieutenant of the baron de Hesse [or *Hèze*], governor of Brussels, entered the council chamber by force, and arrested all the members present, on suspicion of treacherously maintaining intelligence with the Spaniards. Counts Mansfeld and Barlaymont were imprisoned, with some others. Viglius escaped this indignity by being absent from indisposition. This bold measure was hailed by the people with unusual joy, as the signal for that total change in the government which they reckoned on as the prelude to complete freedom.

The *Estates-generals* were all at this time assembled, with the exception of those of Flanders, who joined the others with but little delay. The general reprobation against the Spaniards procured a second decree of proscription; and their desperate conduct justified the utmost violence with which they might be pursued. They still held the citadels of Ghent and Antwerp, as well as Maestricht, which they had seized on, sacked, and pillaged with all the fury which a barbarous enemy inflicts on a town carried by assault.¹ On the 3rd of November, the other body of mutineers, in possession of Alost, marched to the support of their fellow brigands in the citadel of Antwerp; and both, simultaneously attacking this magnificent city, became masters of it in all points, in spite of a vigorous resistance on the part of the citizens. They then began a scene of rapine and destruction unequalled in the annals of these desperate wars, and the most opulent town in Europe was thus reduced to ruin and desolation by a few thousand frantic ruffians.²

THE SPANISH FURY AT ANTWERP

Five thousand veteran foot soldiers, besides six hundred cavalry, armed to the teeth, sallied from the portals of Alva's citadel. In the counterscarp they fell upon their knees, to invoke, according to custom, the blessing of God upon the devil's work which they were about to commit. The *eletto* bore a standard, one side of which was emblazoned with the crucified Saviour, and the other with the Virgin Mary.

The *eletto* was first to mount the rampart; the next instant he was shot dead, while his followers, undismayed, sprang over his body, and poured into the streets. So soon as it was known that the Spaniards had crossed the rampart, that its six thousand defenders were in full retreat, it was inevitable that a panic should seize the city.

Their entrance once effected, the Spanish force had separated, according to previous arrangement, into two divisions, one half charging up the long street of St. Michael, the other forcing its way through the street of St. Joris. "*Santiago, Santiago! España, España! á sangre, á carne, á fuego, á sacco!*" (St. James, Spain, blood, flesh, fire, sack!) — such were the hideous cries which rang through every quarter of the city, as the savage horde advanced.

[¹ Even Spanish bravery recoiled at so desperate an undertaking, but unscrupulous ferocity supplied an expedient where courage was at fault. Each soldier was commanded to seize a woman, and placing her before his own body, to advance across the bridge. The column, thus buckled, to the shame of Spanish chivalry, by female bosoms, moved in good order toward the battery. The soldiers levelled their muskets with steady aim over the shoulders or under the arms of the women whom they thus held before them. On the other hand, the citizens dared not discharge their cannon at their own townswomen, among whose numbers many recognised mothers, sisters, or wives. Maestricht was recovered, and an indiscriminate slaughter instantly avenged its temporary loss.²]

Van Ende, with his German troops, had been stationed by the marquis of Havré to defend the St. Joris gate, but no sooner did the Spaniards under Vargas present themselves than he deserted to them instantly with his whole force. United with the Spanish cavalry, these traitorous defenders of Antwerp dashed in pursuit of those who had been only faint-hearted. Thus the burghers saw themselves attacked by many of their friends, deserted by more. Whom were they to trust? Nevertheless, Oberstein's Germans were brave and faithful, resisting to the last, and dying every man in his harness. The tide of battle flowed hither and thither, through every street and narrow lane. The confused mob of fugitives and conquerors, Spaniards, Walloons, Germans, burghers, struggling, shouting, striking, cursing, dying, swayed hither and thither like a stormy sea. Every house became a fortress. It was difficult to carry the houses by storm, but they were soon set on fire.

In a brief interval, the city hall and other edifices on the square were in flames. The conflagration spread with rapidity — house after house, street after street, taking fire. Nearly a thousand buildings, in the most splendid and wealthy quarter of the city, were soon in a blaze, and multitudes of human beings were burned with them. The many tortuous streets which led down a slight descent from the rear of the town-house to the quays were all one vast conflagration. On the other side, the magnificent cathedral, separated from the Grande place by a single row of buildings, was lighted up, but not attacked by the flames. The tall spire cast its gigantic shadow across the last desperate conflict. Women, children, old men were killed in countless numbers, and still, through all this havoc, directly over the heads of the struggling throng, suspended in mid-air above the din and smoke of the conflict, there sounded, every half quarter of every hour, as if in gentle mockery, from the belfry of the cathedral, the tender and melodious chimes.

Never was there a more monstrous massacre, even in the blood-stained history of the Netherlands. It was estimated that, in the course of this and the two following days, not less than eight thousand human beings were murdered.¹ The Spaniards seemed to cast off even the vizard of humanity. Hell seemed emptied of its fiends. Night fell upon the scene before the soldiers were masters of the city; but worse horrors began after the contest was ended. This army of brigands had come thither with a definite, practical purpose, for it was not blood-thirst, nor lust, nor revenge which had impelled them, but it was greediness for gold. The fire, spreading more extensively and more rapidly than had been desired through the wealthiest quarter of the city, had unfortunately devoured a vast amount of property. Six millions, at least, had thus been swallowed; a destruction by which no one had profited. There was, however, much left. The strong boxes of the merchants, the gold, silver, and precious jewelry, the velvets, satins, brocades, laces, and

¹ This is the estimate of Mendoza *J*; *viz.*, two thousand five hundred slain with the sword, and double that number burned and drowned. Cabrera ² puts the figures at seven thousand and upwards. Bor *J* and Hooft ³ give the same number of dead bodies actually found in the streets, *viz.*, two thousand five hundred; and, estimating the drowned at as many more, leave the number of the burned to conjecture. Meteren, ⁴ who on all occasions seeks to diminish the number of his countrymen slain in battle or massacre, while he magnifies the loss of his opponents, admits that from four to five thousand were slain; adding, however, that but fifteen hundred bodies were found, which were all buried together in two great pits. He thus deducts exactly one thousand from the number of counted corpses, as given by every other authority, Spanish or Flemish. Strada ⁵ gives three thousand as the number of those slain with the sword. The letter of Jerome de Roda to the king, written from the citadel of Antwerp upon the 6th of November, when the carnage was hardly over, estimates the number of the slain at eight thousand, and one thousand horses. This authority, coming from the very hour and spot, and from a man so deeply implicated, may be considered conclusive. — [Blok ⁶ puts the number of slain at between six and seven thousand.]

[1576 A.D.]

similar well-concentrated and portable plunder, were rapidly appropriated. So far the course was plain and easy, but in private houses it was more difficult. The cash, plate, and other valuables of individuals were not so easily discovered. Torture was, therefore, at once employed to discover the hidden treasures.

Two days longer the havoc lasted in the city. Of all the deeds of darkness yet compassed in the Netherlands, this was the worst. It was called the Spanish Fury, by which dread name it has been known for ages. The city which had been a world of wealth and splendour was changed to a charnel-house, and from that hour its commercial prosperity was blasted.

Rarely has so small a band obtained in three days' robbery so large an amount of wealth. Four or five millions divided among five thousand soldiers made up for long arrearsages.

In this Spanish Fury many more were massacred in Antwerp than in the St. Bartholomew at Paris. Almost as many living human beings were dashed out of existence now as there had been statues destroyed in the memorable image-breaking of Antwerp, ten years before — an event which had sent such a thrill of horror through the heart of Catholic Christendom.

Marvellously few Spaniards were slain in these eventful days. Two hundred killed is the largest number stated. The discrepancy seems monstrous, but it is hardly more than often existed between the losses inflicted and sustained by the Spaniards in such combats. Their prowess was equal to their ferocity, and this was enough to make them seem endowed with pre-human powers.

Bor's *i* estimate is two hundred Spaniards killed and four hundred wounded. Hooft *h* gives the same. Mendoza *i* allows only fourteen Spaniards to have been killed, and rather more than twenty wounded. Meteren *l* as usual, considering the honour of his countrymen at stake, finds a grim consolation in adding a few to the number of the enemies slain, and gives a total of three hundred Spaniards killed. Strada *m* gives the two extremes; so that it is almost certain that the number was not less than fourteen nor more than two hundred. These statistics are certainly curious, for it would seem almost impossible that a force numbering between thirty-five hundred and five thousand men (there is this amount of discrepancy in the different estimates) should capture and plunder, with so little loss to themselves, a city of two hundred thousand souls, defended by an army of at least twelve thousand besides a large proportion of burghers bearing weapons. No wonder that the chivalrous Brantôme *o* was in an ecstasy of delight at the achievement, and that the Netherlanders, seeing the prowess and the cruelty of their foes, should come to doubt whether they were men or devils.

This disproportion between the number of Spaniards and states' soldiers slain was the same in all the great encounters, particularly in those of the period which now occupies us. In the six months between the end of August, 1576, and the signing of the Perpetual Edict on the 17th of February, 1577, the Spaniards killed twenty thousand, by the admission of the Netherlanders themselves, and acknowledged less than six slain on their own side! So much for the blood expended annually or monthly by the Netherlanders in defence of liberty and religion. As for the money consumed, the usual estimate of the expense of the states' army was from 800,000 to 1,000,000 guildens monthly, according to Meteren. *l* The same historian calculates the expense of Philip's army at 42,000,000 crowns for the nine years, from 1567 to 1576, which would give nearly 400,000 dollars monthly, half of which he says, came from Spain. The Netherlanders, therefore, furnished the other half, so that

[1576 A.D.]

200,000 dollars, equal to 500,000 guildens, monthly were to be added to the million required for their own war department. Here then was a tax of one and a half millions monthly, or eighteen millions yearly, simply for the keeping of the two armies on foot to destroy the Netherlanders and consume their substance. The frightful loss by confiscations, plunderings, brand-schettings, and the sackings of cities and villages innumerable, was all in addition, of course, but that enormous amount defies calculation. The regular expense in money which they were to meet, if they could, for the mere pay and provision of the armies, was as above, and equal to at least sixty millions yearly to-day, making allowance for the difference in the value of money. This was certainly sufficient for a population of three millions. Their frequent promise to maintain their liberty with their "goods and their blood" was no idle boast — three thousand men and one and a half million florins being consumed monthly.

THE PACIFICATION OF GHENT (1576)

Meantime the prince of Orange sat at Middelburg, watching the storm. The position of Holland and Zeeland with regard to the other fifteen provinces was distinctly characterised. Upon certain points there was an absolute sympathy, while upon others there was a grave and almost fatal difference. It was the task of the prince to deepen the sympathy, to extinguish the difference. In Holland and Zeeland there was a warm and nearly universal adhesion to the reformed religion, a passionate attachment to the ancient political liberties. The prince, although an earnest Calvinist himself, did all in his power to check the growing spirit of intolerance towards the old religion, omitted no opportunity of strengthening the attachment which the people justly felt for their liberal institutions.

On the other hand, in most of the other provinces, the Catholic religion had been regaining its ascendancy. Even in 1574, the states assembled at Brussels declared to Requesens that they would rather die the death than see any change in their religion. That feeling had rather increased than diminished.

As to political convictions, the fifteen provinces differed much less from their two sisters. There was a strong attachment to their old constitutions, a general inclination to make use of the present crisis to effect their restoration. At the same time, it had not come to be the general conviction, as in Holland and Zeeland, that the maintenance of those liberties was incompatible with the continuance of Philip's authority. The great bond of sympathy, however, between all the seventeen was their common hatred to the foreign soldiery. Upon this deeply embedded, immovable fulcrum of an ancient national hatred, the sudden mutiny of the whole Spanish army served as a lever of incalculable power. The prince seized it as from the hand of God. Thus armed, he proposed to himself the task of overturning the mass of oppression under which the old liberties of the country had so long been crushed. To effect this object, adroitness was as requisite as courage.

The prince, therefore, in all his addresses and documents, was careful to disclaim any intention of disturbing the established religion, or of making any rash political changes.

Having sought to impress upon his countrymen the gravity of the position, he led them to seek the remedy in audacity and in union. He familiarised them with his theory that the legal, historical government of the provinces belonged to the states-general, to a congress of nobles, clergy, and commons,

[1576 A. D.]

appointed from each of the seventeen provinces. He maintained, with reason, that the government of the Netherlands was a representative constitutional government, under the hereditary authority of the king. Letters were addressed to the states of nearly every province. Those bodies were urgently implored to appoint deputies to a general congress, at which a close and formal union between Holland and Zealand with the other provinces might be effected. The place appointed for the deliberations was the city of Ghent. Here, by the middle of October, a large number of delegates had already assembled although the citadel commanding the city was held by the Spaniards.

The massacre at Antwerp and the eloquence of the prince produced a most quickening effect upon the congress at Ghent. Their deliberations had proceeded with decorum and earnestness, in the midst of the cannonading against the citadel, and the fortress fell on the same day which saw the conclusion of the treaty.

This important instrument, by which the sacrifices and exertions of the prince were, for a brief season at least, rewarded, contained twenty-five articles. The prince of Orange, with the states of Holland and Zealand on the one side, and the provinces signing, or thereafter to sign the treaty, on the other, agreed that there should be a mutual forgiving and forgetting, as regarded the past. They vowed a close and faithful friendship for the future. They plighted a mutual promise to expel the Spaniards from the Netherlands without delay. As soon as this great deed should be done, there was to be a convocation of the states-general, on the basis of that assembly before which the abdication of the emperor had taken place.

By this congress, the affairs of religion in Holland and Zealand should be regulated, as well as the surrender of fortresses and other places belonging to his majesty. There was to be full liberty of communication and traffic between the citizens of the one side and the other. It should not be legal, however, for those of Holland and Zealand to attempt anything outside their own territory against the Roman Catholic religion, nor for cause thereof to injure or irritate any one, by deed or word. All the placards and edicts on the subject of heresy, together with the criminal ordinances made by the duke of Alva, were suspended, until the states-general should otherwise ordain. The prince was to remain lieutenant, admiral, and general for his majesty in Holland, Zealand, and the associated places, till otherwise provided by the states-general, after the departure of the Spaniards. The cities and places included in the prince's commission, but not yet acknowledging his authority, should receive satisfaction from him, as to the point of religion and other matters, before subscribing to the union. All prisoners, and particularly the count of Bossu, should be released without ransom. All estates and other property not already alienated should be restored, all confiscations since 1566 being declared null and void. The countess palatine, widow of Brederode, and count of Buren, son of the prince of Orange, were expressly named in this provision. Prelates and ecclesiastical persons, having property in Holland and Zealand, should be reinstated, if possible; but in case of alienation, which was likely to be generally the case, there should be reasonable compensation. It was to be decided by the states-general whether the provinces should discharge the debts incurred by the prince of Orange in his two campaigns. Provinces and cities should not have the benefit of this union until they had signed the treaty, but they should be permitted to sign it when they chose.

This memorable document was subscribed at Ghent on the 8th of Novem-

[1576 A.D.]

ber, by Sainte-Aldegonde, with eight other commissioners appointed by the prince of Orange and the estates of Holland on the one side, and by Elbertus Leoninus and other deputies appointed by Brabant, Flanders, Artois, Hainault, Valenciennes, Lille, Douai, Orchies, Namur, Tournay, Utrecht, and Mechlin on the other side.

The arrangement was a masterpiece of diplomacy on the part of the prince, for it was as effectual a provision for the safety of the reformed religion as could be expected under the circumstances. It was much, considering the change which had been wrought of late years in the fifteen provinces, that they should consent to any treaty with their two heretic sisters. It was much more that the Pacification should recognise the new religion as the established creed of Holland and Zealand, while at the same time the infamous edicts of Charles were formally abolished. In the fifteen Catholic provinces, there was to be no prohibition of private reformed worship. The whole strength of the nation enlisted to expel the foreign soldiery from the soil. This was the work of William the Silent, and the prince thus saw the labour of years crowned with at least a momentary success.

His satisfaction was very great when it was announced to him, many days before the exchange of the signatures, that the treaty had been concluded. He was desirous that the Pacification should be referred for approval, not to the municipal magistrates only, but to the people itself. Proclaimed in the market-place of every city and village, it was ratified, not by votes, but by hymns of thanksgiving, by triumphal music, by thundering of cannon, and by the blaze of beacons, throughout the Netherlands.

Another event added to the satisfaction of the hour. The country so recently and by deeds of such remarkable audacity conquered by the Spaniards in the north, was recovered almost simultaneously with the conclusion of the Ghent treaty. It was a natural consequence of the great mutiny. The troops having entirely deserted Mondragon, it became necessary for that officer to abandon Zieriksee, the city which had been won with so much valour. In the beginning of November, the capital, and with it the whole island of Schouwen, together with the rest of Zealand, excepting Tholen, was recovered by Count Hohenlohe, lieutenant-general of the prince of Orange, and acting according to his instructions.

Thus on this particular point of time many great events had been crowded. At the very same moment Zealand had been redeemed, Antwerp saved, and the league of all the Netherlands against the Spaniards concluded. It now became known that another and most important event had occurred at the same instant. On the day before the Antwerp massacre, four days before the publication of the Ghent treaty, a foreign cavalier, attended by a Moorish slave and by six men-at-arms, rode into the streets of Luxemburg. The cavalier was Don Ottavio Gonzaga, brother of the prince of Melfi. The Moorish slave was Don John of Austria, the son of the emperor, the conqueror of Granada, the hero of Lepanto. The new governor-general had traversed Spain and France in disguise with great celerity, and in the romantic manner which belonged to his character. He stood at last on the threshold of the Netherlands, but with all his speed he had arrived a few days too late.

DON JOHN OF AUSTRIA

Don John of Austria was now in his thirty-second year, having been born in Ratisbon or the 24th of February, 1545. His father was Charles V, emperor of Germany, king of Spain, dominator of Asia, Africa, and America;

[1576 A.D.]

his mother was Barbara Blomberg, washerwoman of Ratisbon. Introduced to the emperor, originally, that she might alleviate his melancholy by her singing, she soon exhausted all that was harmonious in her nature, for never was a more uncomfortable, unmanageable personage than Barbara in her after life. Married to one Pyramus Kegell, who was made a military commissary in the Netherlands, she was left a widow in the beginning of Alva's administration. Placed under the especial superintendence of the duke, she became the torment of that warrior's life. The terrible governor, who could almost crush the heart out of a nation of three millions, was unable to curb this single termagant.

Notwithstanding every effort to entice, to intimidate, and to kidnap her from the Netherlands, there she remained, through all vicissitudes, even till the arrival of Don John. By his persuasions or commands she was, at last, induced to accept an exile for the remainder of her days in Spain, but revenged herself by asserting that he was quite mistaken in supposing himself the emperor's child; a point, certainly, upon which her authority might be thought conclusive. Thus there was a double mystery about Don John. He might be the issue of august parentage on one side; he was, possibly, sprung of most ignoble blood on both. Base-born at best, he was not sure whether to look for the author of his being in the halls of the Cæsars or the booths of Ratisbon mechanics.

Perhaps there was as much good faith on the part of Don John, when he arrived in Luxemburg, as could be expected of a man coming directly from the cabinet of Philip. The king had secretly instructed him to conciliate the provinces, but to concede nothing. He was directed to restore the government to its state during the imperial epoch. Seventeen provinces, in two of which the population were all dissenters, in all of which the principle of mutual toleration had just been accepted by Catholics and Protestants, were now to be brought back to the condition according to which all Protestants were beheaded, burned, or buried alive. The crusader of Granada and Lepanto, the champion of the ancient church, was not likely to please the rugged Zealanders who had let themselves be hacked to pieces rather than say one Paternoster, and who had worn crescents in their caps at Leyden, to prove their deeper hostility to the pope than to the Turk.

It was with a calm determination to counteract and crush the policy of the youthful governor that William the Silent awaited his antagonist. Were Don John admitted to confidence, the peace of Holland and Zealand was gone. He had arrived, with all the self-confidence of a conqueror; he did not know that he was to be played upon like a pipe, to be caught in meshes spread by his own hands, to struggle blindly, to rage impotently — to die ingloriously.^b

CONCILIATORY POLICY OF DON JOHN

It is probable that his intentions were really honourable and candid. The states-general were not less embarrassed than the prince. His sudden arrival threw them into great perplexity, which was increased by the conciliatory tone of his letter. They had now removed from Ghent to Brussels; and first sending deputies to pay the honours of a ceremonious welcome to Don John, they wrote to the prince of Orange, then in Holland, for his advice in this difficult conjuncture. The prince replied by a memorial of considerable length, dated Middelburg, the 30th of November, in which he gave them the most wise and prudent advice; the substance of which was to receive any propositions coming from the wily and perfidious Philip with the utmost

[1577 A. D.]

suspicion, and to refuse all negotiation with his deputy, if the immediate withdrawal of the foreign troops was not at once conceded and the acceptance of the pacification guaranteed in its most ample extent.

This advice was implicitly followed; the states in the mean time taking the precaution of assembling a large body of troops at Wavre, between Brussels and Namur, the command of which was given to the count of Lalaing. A still more important measure was the despatch of an envoy to England, to implore the assistance of Elizabeth. She acted on this occasion with frankness and intrepidity; giving a distinguished reception to the envoy Swevegghem, and advancing a loan of £100,000, on condition that the states made no treaty without her knowledge or participation.

To secure still more closely the federal union that now bound the different provinces, a new compact was concluded by the deputies on the 9th of January, 1577, known by the title of the Union of Brussels, and signed by the prelates, ecclesiastics, lords, gentlemen, magistrates, and others, representing the states of the Netherlands.¹ A copy of this act of union was transmitted to Don John, and after some months of cautious parleying, in the latter part of which the candour of the prince seemed doubtful, and which the native historians do not hesitate to stigmatise as merely assumed, a treaty was signed at Marche-en-Famène, a place between Namur and Luxemburg, in which every point insisted on by the states was, to the surprise and delight of the nation, fully consented to and guaranteed.¹

This important document is called the Perpetual Edict, bears date the 12th of February, 1577, and contains nineteen articles. They were all based on the acceptance of the Pacification; but one expressly stipulated that the count of Buren should be set at liberty as soon as the prince of Orange, his father, had on his part ratified the treaty.²

In the Pacification of Ghent, the prince had achieved the price of his life-long labours. He had banded a mass of provinces, by the ties of a common history, language, and customs, into a league against a foreign tyranny. He had grappled Holland and Zealand to their sister provinces by a common love for their ancient liberties, by a common hatred to a Spanish soldiery. He had exorcised the evil demon of religious bigotry by which the body politic had been possessed so many years; for the Ghent treaty, largely interpreted, opened the door to universal toleration. In the Perpetual Edict the prince saw his work undone. Holland and Zealand were again cut adrift from the other fifteen provinces, and war would soon be let loose upon that devoted little territory.^b

Don John made his solemn entry into Brussels on the 1st of May, and assumed the functions of his limited authority. The conditions of the treaty were promptly and regularly fulfilled. The citadels occupied by the Spanish soldiers were given up to the Flemish and Walloon troops; and the departure of these ferocious foreigners took place at once. The large sums required to facilitate this measure made it necessary to submit for a while to the presence of the German mercenaries.

But Don John's conduct soon destroyed the temporary delusion which had deceived the country. Whether his projects were hitherto only concealed,

[¹ The Ghent Pacification, which was in the nature of a treaty between the prince and the states of Holland and Zealand on the one side, and a certain number of provinces on the other, had only been signed by the envoys of the contracting parties. Though received with deserved and universal acclamation, it had not the authority of a popular document. This, however, was the character studiously impressed upon the Brussels Union. The people, subdivided according to the various grades of their social hierarchy, had been solemnly summoned to council, and had deliberately recorded their conviction.^b]

[1577 A. D.]

or that they were now for the first time excited by the disappointment of those hopes of authority held out to him by Philip, and which his predecessors had shared, it is certain that he very early displayed his ambition, and very imprudently attempted to put it in force. He at once demanded from the council of state the command of the troops and the disposal of the revenues. The answer was a simple reference to the Pacification of Ghent; and the prince's rejoinder was an apparent submission, and the immediate despatch of letters in cipher to the king, demanding a supply of troops sufficient to restore his ruined authority. These letters were intercepted by the king of Navarre, afterwards Henry IV of France, who immediately transmitted them to the prince of Orange, his old friend and fellow soldier.

Public opinion, to the suspicions of which Don John had been from the first obnoxious, was now unanimous in attributing to design all that was unconstitutional and unfair. His impetuous character could no longer submit to the restraint of dissimulation, and he resolved to take some bold and decided measure. A very favourable opportunity was presented in the arrival of the queen of Navarre, Marguerite of Valois, at Namur, on her way to Spa. The prince, numerously attended, hastened to the former town under pretence of paying his respects to the queen. As soon as she left the place, he repaired to the glacis of the town, as if for the mere enjoyment of a walk, admired the external appearance of the citadel, and expressed a desire to be admitted inside. The young court of Barlaymont, in the absence of his father, the governor of the place, and an accomplice in the plot with Don John, freely admitted him. The prince immediately drew forth a pistol, and exclaimed that that was the first moment of his government, took possession of the place with his immediate guard, and instantly formed them into a devoted garrison.

ORANGE MADE RUWARD; MATTHIAS GOVERNOR

The prince of Orange immediately made public the intercepted letters; and, at the solicitation of the states-general, repaired to Brussels; into which city he made a truly triumphant entry on the 23rd of September, and was immediately nominated governor, protector, or ruward¹ of Brabant — a dignity which had fallen into disuse, but was revived on this occasion, and which was little inferior in power to that of the dictators of Rome.^p A ruward was not exactly dictator, although his authority was universal. He was not exactly protector, nor governor, nor stadholder. His functions were unlimited as to time — therefore superior to those of an ancient dictator; they were commonly conferred on the natural heir to the sovereignty — therefore more lofty than those of ordinary stadholders. The individuals who had previously held the office in the Netherlands had usually reigned

[¹ The fact that the election of Orange as *ruward* or *ruwaert* of Brabant was due to violence, though not mentioned by English and American historians of the Netherlands, has been clearly established by Belgian scholars. In fact, the prince himself, when charged in Philip's ban with securing his election "by force and tumult," did not deny that these means were employed, but declared in his memorable *Apology* that instead of seeking he had refused the office. His subsequent acceptance of it showed that he thought it was time to use this exalted position to baffle the designs of his enemies. The important fact, which even Motley^b does not mention, that Orange owed his election to a popular tumult, is proved by Gachard,^q — *Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciturne*; and by De Robaulx de Soumoy,^r the learned editor of *Mémoires de Frédéric Perrenot* (the famous Champagny). It is noticeable that both these competent critics trace the prince's subtle agency in this uprising, as well as in the seizure of the duke of Aerschot and other Catholic leaders, which had such serious results for the cause of liberty and union in the Netherlands. — YOUNG.^s]

[1576-1577 A.D.]

afterwards in their own right. Duke Albert, of the Bavaria line, for example, had been ruward of Hainault and Holland for thirty years, during the insanity of his brother, and on the death of Duke William had succeeded to his title. Philip of Burgundy had declared himself ruward of Brabant in 1425, and had shortly afterwards deprived Jacqueline of all her titles and appropriated them to himself.^b

The prince's authority, now almost unlimited, extended over every province of the Netherlands, except Namur and Luxemburg, both of which acknowledged Don John.

The first care of the liberated nation was to demolish the various citadels rendered celebrated and odious by the excesses of the Spaniards. This was done with an enthusiastic industry in which every age and sex bore a part, and which promised well for liberty. Among the ruins of that of Antwerp the statue of the duke of Alva was discovered, dragged through the filthiest streets of the town, and, with all the indignity so well merited by the original, it was finally broken into a thousand pieces.¹

The country, in conferring such extensive powers on the prince of Orange, had certainly gone too far—not for his desert, but for its own tranquillity. It was impossible that such an elevation should not excite the discontent and awaken the energy of the haughty aristocracy of Flanders and Brabant; and particularly of the house of Croy, the ancient rivals of that of Nassau. The then representative of that family seemed the person most suited to counterbalance William's excessive power. The duke of Aerschot was therefore named governor of Flanders; and he immediately put himself at the head of a confederacy of the Catholic party, which quickly decided to offer the chief government of the country, still in the name of Philip, to the archduke Matthias, brother of the emperor Rudolf II, and cousin german to Philip of Spain, a youth but nineteen years of age. A Flemish gentleman named Maelsted was entrusted with the proposal. Matthias joyously consented; and, quitting Vienna with the greatest secrecy, he arrived at Maastricht, without any previous announcement, and expected only by the party that had invited him, at the end of October, 1577.

The prince of Orange, instead of showing the least symptom of dissatisfaction at this underhand proceeding aimed at his personal authority, announced his perfect approval of the nomination, and was the foremost in recommending measures for the honour of the archduke and the security of the country. He drew up the basis of a treaty for Matthias' acceptance, on terms which guaranteed to the council of state and the states-general the virtual sovereignty, and left to the young prince little beyond the fine title which had dazzled his boyish vanity. The prince of Orange was appointed his lieutenant, in all the branches of the administration, civil, military, or financial; and the duke of Aerschot, who had hoped to obtain an entire domination over the puppet he had brought upon the stage, saw himself totally foiled in his project, and left without a chance or a pretext for the least increase to his influence.

But a still greater disappointment attended this ambitious nobleman in the very stronghold of his power. The Flemings, driven by persecution to a state of fury almost unnatural, had, in their antipathy to Spain, adopted a hatred against Catholicism which had its source only in political frenzy, while the converts imagined it to arise from reason and conviction.

Two men had taken advantage of this state of the public mind, and

[¹ The bulk was melted again and reconverted by a most natural metamorphosis into the cannon from which it had originally sprung. — MOTLEY.^b]

[1577-1578 A.D.]

gained over it an unbounded ascendancy. They were Francis van der Kéthulle lord of Ryhove, and Jan van Hembyze [or Imbize], who each seemed formed to realise the beau-ideal of a factious demagogue. They had acquired supreme power over the people of Ghent, and had at their command a body of twenty thousand resolute and well-armed supporters. The duke of Aerschot vainly attempted to oppose his authority to that of these men; and he on one occasion imprudently exclaimed that "he would have them hanged, even though they were protected by the prince of Orange himself." The same night Ryhove summoned the leaders of his bands; and quickly assembling a considerable force, they repaired to the duke's hotel, made him prisoner, and, without allowing him time to dress, carried him away in triumph. At the same time the bishops of Bruges and Ypres, the high bailiffs of Ghent and Courtrai, the governor of Oudenarde, and other important magistrates, were arrested — accused of complicity with the duke, but of what particular offence the lawless demagogues did not deign to specify. The two tribunes immediately divided the whole honours and authority of administration — Ryhove as military, and Hembyze as civil chief.¹

The latter of these legislators completely changed the forms of the government; he revived the ancient privileges destroyed by Charles V, and took all preliminary measures for forcing the various provinces to join with the city of Ghent in forming a federative republic. The states-general and the prince of Orange were alarmed lest these troubles might lead to a renewal of the anarchy from the effects of which the country had but just obtained breathing time. Ryhove consented, at the remonstrance of the prince of Orange, to release the duke of Aerschot; but William was obliged to repair to Ghent in person, in the hope of establishing order. He arrived on the 29th of December, and entered on a strict inquiry with his usual calmness and decision. He could not succeed in obtaining the liberty of the other prisoners, though he pleaded for them strongly. Having severely reprimanded the factious leaders, and pointed out the dangers of their illegal course, he returned to Brussels, leaving the factious city in a temporary tranquillity which his firmness and discretion could alone have obtained.

The archduke Matthias, having visited Antwerp, and acceded to all the conditions required of him, made his public entry into Brussels on the 18th of January, 1578, and was installed in his dignity of governor-general amidst the usual fetes and rejoicings. Don John of Austria was at the same time declared an enemy to the country, with a public order to quit it without delay; and a prohibition was issued against any inhabitant acknowledging his forfeited authority.

OUTBREAK OF WAR

War was now once more openly declared, some fruitless negotiations having afforded a fair pretext for hostilities. The rapid appearance of a numerous army under the orders of Don John gave strength to the suspicions of his former dissimulation. It was currently believed that large bodies of the Spanish troops had remained concealed in the forests of Luxemburg and Lorraine; while several regiments, which had remained in France in the service of the League, immediately re-entered the Netherlands. Alessandro Farnese prince

[¹ Thus audaciously, successfully, and hitherto without bloodshed, was the anti-Catholic revolution commenced in Flanders. The event was the first of a long and most signal series. The effect of this sudden rising of the popular party was prodigious throughout the Netherlands. At the same time the audacity of such extreme proceedings could hardly be countenanced by any considerable party in the states-general.^b]

of Parma, son of the former governant, came to the aid of his uncle Don John at the head of a large force of Italians; and these several reinforcements, with the German auxiliaries still in the country, composed an army of twenty thousand men. The army of the states-general was still larger, but far inferior in point of discipline. It was commanded by Antoine de Goignies, a gentleman of Hainault, and an old soldier of the school of Charles V.

After a sharp affair at the village of Riminants, in which the royalists had the worst, the two armies met at Gembloux [or Gemblours] on the 31st of January, 1578.^p

THE DISASTER OF GEMBOUX (1578)

Don John, making a selection of some six hundred cavalry, all picked men, with a thousand infantry, divided the whole into two bodies, which he placed under command of Gonzaga and the famous old Christopher Mondragon. These officers received orders to hang on the rear of the enemy, to harass him, and to do him all possible damage consistent with the possibility of avoiding a general engagement, until the main army under Parma and Don John should arrive. The retiring army of the states was then proceeding along the borders of a deep ravine, filled with mire and water, and as broad as and more dangerous than a river. In the midst of the skirmishing, Alessandro of Parma rode up to reconnoitre. He saw at once that the columns of the enemy were marching unsteadily to avoid being precipitated into this creek. He observed the waving of their spears, the general confusion of their ranks, and was quick to take advantage of the fortunate moment.

He drew up his little force in a compact column. Then, with a few words of encouragement, he launched them at the foe. The violent and entirely unexpected shock was even more successful than the prince had anticipated. The hostile cavalry reeled and fell into hopeless confusion, Egmont in vain striving to rally them to resistance. That name had lost its magic. Goignies also attempted, without success, to restore order among the panic-struck ranks. Assaulted in flank and rear at the same moment, and already in temporary confusion, the cavalry of the enemy turned their backs and fled. The centre of the states' army, thus left exposed, was now warmly attacked by Parma. It had, moreover, been already thrown into disorder by the retreat of its own horse, as they charged through them in rapid and disgraceful panic. The whole army broke to pieces at once, and so great was the trepidation that the conquered troops had hardly courage to run away. They were utterly incapable of combat. Not a blow was struck by the fugitives. Hardly a man in the Spanish ranks was wounded; while, in the course of an hour and a half, the whole force of the enemy was exterminated.

It is impossible to state with accuracy the exact numbers slain. Some accounts spoke of ten thousand killed, or captive, with absolutely no loss on the royal side.

Rarely had a more brilliant exploit been performed by a handful of cavalry. A whole army was overthrown. Everything belonging to the enemy fell into the hands of the Spaniards. Thirty-four standards, many field-pieces, much camp equipage, and ammunition, besides some seven or eight thousand dead bodies, and six hundred living prisoners, were the spoils of that winter's day. Of the captives, some were soon afterwards hurled off the bridge at Namur, and drowned like dogs in the Maas, while the rest were all hanged, none escaping with life. Don John's clemency was not superior to that of his sanguinary predecessors.

[1578 A.D.]

And so another proof was added — if proofs were still necessary — of Spanish prowess. The Netherlanders may be pardoned if their foes seemed to them supernatural, and almost invulnerable. How else could these enormous successes be accounted for? How else could thousands fall before the Spanish swords, while hardly a single Spanish corpse told of effectual resistance? At Jemmingen, Alva had lost seven soldiers, and slain seven thousand; in the Antwerp Fury, two hundred Spaniards, at most, had fallen, while eight thousand burghers and states' troops had been butchered; and now at Gembloux, six, seven, eight, ten — heaven knew how many thousands had been exterminated, and hardly a single Spaniard had been slain! Undoubtedly, the first reason for this result was the superiority of the Spanish soldiers. They were the boldest, the best disciplined, the most experienced in the world. Their audacity, promptness, and ferocity made them almost invincible. Moreover, they were commanded by the most renowned captains of the age.^b

The news of this battle threw the states into the utmost consternation. Brussels being considered insecure, the archduke Matthias and his council retired to Antwerp; but the victors did not feel their forces sufficient to justify an attack upon the capital. They, however, took Louvain, Tirlemont, and several other towns; but these conquests were of little import in comparison with the loss of Amsterdam, which declared openly and unanimously for the patriot cause. The states-general recovered their courage, and prepared for a new contest. They sent deputies to the diet of Worms, to ask succour from the princes of the empire. The count palatine John Kasimir repaired to their assistance with a considerable force of Germans and English, all equipped and paid by Queen Elizabeth. Francis duke of Alençon and of Anjou, and brother of Henry III of France, hovered on the frontiers of Hainault with a respectable army.¹

But all the various chiefs had separate interests and opposite views; while the fanatic violence of the people of Ghent sapped the foundations of the pacification to which the town had given its name.² The Walloon provinces, deep-rooted in their attachment to religious bigotry, which they loved still better than political freedom, gradually withdrew from the common cause; and without yet openly becoming reconciled with Spain, they adopted a neutrality which was tantamount to it. Don John was, however, deprived of all chance of reaping any advantage from these unfortunate dissensions. He was suddenly taken ill in his camp at Bougy; and died [probably of a camp fever], after a fortnight's suffering, on the 1st of October, 1578, in the 33rd year of his age.^p

ADMINISTRATION OF THE DUKE OF PARMA

On the death of Don John the command of the royal army fell to his nephew Alessandro Farnese, duke of Parma. He was descended from Charles V through his mother the duchess Margaret, under whose administration the first troubles had broken out. He had already fought in Belgium on the side of his young and unfortunate relative — they were both of the same

[¹ He had been vainly offered the sovereignty of the provinces, and called to assist under the title of "Protector of Netherlandish liberty." Motley ^b accuses him of being "the most despicable personage who had ever entered the Netherlands," and claims that Orange encouraged him only to keep Queen Elizabeth anxious to forestall a French alliance.]

[² All Flanders was prey to a Calvinist terrorism which made the Catholics long for Don John's sovereignty. They had lost faith in Orange. — Blok.]

[1578-1579 A. D.]

age — and the latter, on his death-bed, had named him as his successor. Everything justified the choice — none of the old Spanish generals exceeded the duke in valour, military experience, prudence in council, and resources in danger. To these qualities was joined great executive ability. Perhaps he had more talents than virtues, but his conduct was that of a man who was master of himself, and too used to leading others to let his own faults interfere with his success.

He soon managed to get together, in the provinces that remained loyal to him (Namur and Luxemburg), as many as thirty-two thousand soldiers, almost all foreigners. This would have been but a small force to oppose to the Belgians if harmony had reigned among the latter. But there was already open schism between the Catholics and the Protestants. Hembyze and Ryhove took John Kasimir's troops into the pay of the city and with this reinforcement made themselves master of all *La Flandre Flamingante*, where Protestantism had already spread among the lower classes; all the more eager for the change since they were experiencing a condition of affairs the like of which had never been known before. Everywhere power was seized by the most factious, and such was their violence that French Flanders, Artois, and Hainault became indignant and formed a defensive alliance, seceding in a formal manner from the confederated provinces (January 6th, 1579).^d

THE UNION OF UTRECHT (1579)

The states-general and the whole national party regarded, with prophetic dismay, the approaching dismemberment of their common country. They sent deputation on deputation to the Walloon states, to warn them of their danger, and to avert, if possible, the fatal measure. Treachery and religious fanaticism had undermined the bulwark almost as soon as reared. As, in besieged cities, a sudden breastwork is thrown up internally, when the outward defences are crumbling — so the energy of Orange had been silently preparing the Union of Utrecht, as a temporary defence until the foe should be beaten back and there should be time to decide on their future course of action.

During the whole month of December, an active correspondence had been carried on between the prince and his brother John, with various agents in Gelderland, Friesland, and Groningen, as well as with influential personages in the more central provinces and cities. Gelderland, the natural bulwark to Holland and Zealand, commanding the four great rivers of the country, had been fortunately placed under the government of the trusty John of Nassau, that province being warmly in favour of a closer union with its sister provinces, and particularly with those more nearly allied to itself in religion and in language.

Already in December (1578), Count John, in behalf of his brother, had laid before the states of Holland and Zealand, assembled at Gorkum, the project of a new union with "Gelderland, Ghent, Friesland, Utrecht, Overysse, and Groningen." The proposition had been favourably entertained, and commissioners had been appointed to confer with other commissioners at Utrecht, whenever they should be summoned by Count John. The prince chose not to be the ostensible mover in the plan himself. He did not wish to startle unnecessarily the archduke Matthias, nor to be cried out upon as infringing the Ghent Pacification, although the whole world knew that treaty to be hopelessly annulled. For these and many other weighty motives he

[1578-1579 A.D.]

proposed that the new union should be the apparent work of other hands, and only offered to him and to the country when nearly completed.

After various preliminary meetings in December and January, the deputies of Gelderland and Zutphen, with Count John, stadholder of these provinces, at their head, met with the deputies of Holland, Zealand, and the provinces between the Ems and the Lauwers, early in January, 1579, and on the 23rd of that month, without waiting longer for the deputies of the other provinces, they agreed provisionally upon a treaty of union which was published afterwards on the 29th, from the town-house of Utrecht.

This memorable document — which is ever regarded as the foundation of the Netherland Republic — contained twenty-six articles. The preamble stated the object of the union. It was to strengthen, not to forsake the Ghent Pacification, already nearly annihilated by the force of foreign soldiery. The contracting provinces agreed to remain eternally united, as if they were but one province. At the same time, it was understood that each was to retain its particular privileges, liberties, laudable and traditionary customs, and other laws. The cities, corporations, and inhabitants of every province were to be guaranteed as to their ancient constitutions. The provinces, by virtue of the union, were to defend each other "with life, goods, and blood," against all force brought against them in the king's name or behalf. They were also to defend each other against all foreign or domestic potentates, provinces, or cities, provided such defence were controlled by the "generality" of the union. For the expense occasioned by the protection of the provinces, certain imposts and excises were to be equally assessed and collected. No truce or peace was to be concluded, no war commenced, no impost established affecting the "generality," but by unanimous advice and consent of the provinces.

Upon other matters the majority was to decide, the votes being taken in the manner then customary in the assembly of states-general. None of the united provinces, or of their cities or corporations, was to make treaties with other potentates or states, without consent of its confederates. If neighbouring princes, provinces, or cities wished to enter into this confederacy, they were to be received by the unanimous consent of the united provinces. A common currency was to be established for the confederacy. In the matter of divine worship, Holland and Zealand were to conduct themselves as they should think proper. The other provinces of the union, however, were either to conform to the "religious peace" already laid down by Archduke Matthias and his council, or to make such other arrangements as each province should for itself consider appropriate for the maintenance of its internal tranquillity — provided always that every individual should remain free in his religion, and that no man should be molested or questioned on the subject of divine worship as had been already established by the Ghent Pacification.

Such were the simple provisions of that instrument which became the foundation of the powerful commonwealth of the United Netherlands. On the day when it was concluded, there were present deputies from five provinces only. Count John of Nassau signed first, as stadholder of Gelderland and Zutphen. His signature was followed by those of four deputies from that double province; and the envoys of Holland, Zealand, Utrecht, and the Frisian provinces then signed the document.

The prince himself, although in reality the principal director of the movement, delayed appending his signature until May the 3rd, 1579. Herein he was actuated by the reasons already stated, and by the hope which he still entertained that a wider union might be established, with Matthias for its

[1579 A. D.]

nominal chief. His enemies, as usual, attributed this patriotic delay to baser motives. They accused him of a desire to assume the governor-generalship himself, to the exclusion of the archduke — an insinuation which the states of Holland took occasion formally to denounce as a calumny. For those who have studied the character and history of the man, a defence against such slander is superfluous. Matthias was but the shadow, Orange the substance. The archduke had been accepted only to obviate the evil effects of a political intrigue, and with the express condition that the prince should be his lieutenant-general in name, his master in fact. Directly after his departure in the following year, the prince's authority, which nominally departed also, was re-established in his own person, and by express act of the states-general.

The Union of Utrecht was the foundation-stone of the Netherland Republic: but the framers of the confederacy did not intend the establishment of a republic, or of an independent commonwealth of any kind. They had not forsworn the Spanish monarch. It was not yet their intention to forswear him. Certainly the act of union contained no allusion to such an important step. On the contrary, in the brief preamble they expressly stated their intention to strengthen the Ghent Pacification, and the Ghent Pacification acknowledged obedience to the king. They intended no political innovation of any kind. No doubt the formal renunciation of allegiance, which was to follow within two years, was contemplated by many as a future probability; but it could not be foreseen with certainty.

The establishment of a republic, which lasted two centuries, which threw a girdle of rich dependencies entirely round the globe, and which attained so remarkable a height of commercial prosperity and political influence, was the result of the Utrecht Union; but it was not a premeditated result. The future confederacy was not to resemble the system of the German Empire, for it was to acknowledge no single head. It was to differ from the Achaean League, in the far inferior amount of power which it permitted to its general assembly, and in the consequently greater proportion of sovereign attributes which were retained by the individual states.

It was, on the other hand, to furnish a closer and more intimate bond than that of the Swiss confederacy, which was only a union for defence and external purposes, of cantons otherwise independent. It was, finally, to differ from the American federal commonwealth in the great feature that it was to be merely a confederacy of sovereignties, not a representative republic. Its foundation was a compact, not a constitution. The contracting parties were states and corporations, who considered themselves as representing small nationalities *de jure et de facto*, and as succeeding to the supreme power at the very instant in which allegiance to the Spanish monarch was renounced. The general assembly was a collection of diplomatic envoys, bound by instruction from independent states. The voting was not by heads, but by states. The deputies were not representatives of the people, but of the states; for the people of the United States of the Netherlands never assembled — as did the people of the United States of America two centuries later — to lay down a constitution, by which they granted a generous amount of power to the union, while they reserved enough of sovereign attributes to secure that local self-government which is the life-blood of liberty.

Could the jealousy of great nobles, the rancour of religious differences, the Catholic bigotry of the Walloon population on the one side, contending with the democratic insanity of the Ghent populace on the other, have been restrained within bounds by the moderate counsels of William of Orange,

[1579 A.D.]

it would have been possible to unite seventeen provinces instead of seven, and to save many long and blighting years of civil war.

Thus by the Union of Utrecht on the one hand, and the fast approaching reconciliation of the Walloon provinces on the other, the work of decomposition and of construction went hand in hand.^b

