

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST YEARS OF WILLIAM THE SILENT

[1570-1584 A.D.]

By a few wise concessions made in good time at the origin of the troubles and loyally maintained, Philip II might have saved intact the heritage of the house of Burgundy, and also preserved the old religion in the whole extent of the seventeen provinces. As a result of adopting an inexorable system and calling tyranny to his aid, before his death the son of Charles V beheld his inheritance dismembered and Protestantism triumphant and dominant in the new republic of the united provinces. The punishment of the proudest and most powerful king of the sixteenth century was still more cruel.

That Batavian federation, so feeble in its commencement, gradually became one of the most formidable states of Europe, and as stadholders the descendants of the proscribed William the Silent raised themselves above the descendants of his proscriber. They vanquished Spain and dictated laws to it. The Dutch Republic was extending its power and commanding admiration when the Spanish monarchy, exhausted by such a long struggle, was drawing after it in its humiliation and its ruin the states which, unhappily for themselves, had not been able to detach themselves irrevocably from the fatal dominion of Philip II.

After joining the Protestants and valiantly fighting with them, the Belgian malcontents finally abandoned them, thus deserting the great cause of the Netherlands. But this fatal determination, which even the tumults and aggressions of the Calvinist party could scarcely excuse, was cruelly expiated. The submission of the Catholic Belgians to Spain, accomplished too quickly and with too great lack of foresight, was the principal cause of the long decay and dismemberment of the southern Netherlands.^b

[1579 A.D.]

PARMA BESIEGES MAESTRICHT (1579)

After the Union of Utrecht, the North and South ceased to fight together. The duke of Alençon, jealous of the count palatine, had abruptly returned to France, and, as the archduke Matthias possessed neither money nor troops, he was reduced to an absolute nullity. The duke of Parma knew how to profit skilfully by these circumstances. He advanced into Brabant with all his forces and compelled the troops of the states to fall back upon Antwerp. This movement brought to light John Kasimir's German bands, isolated in Flanders and already embroiled with the people of Ghent. Their leader had gone to England, and, without waiting his return, they made terms with Parma and obtained a safe conduct to return to their own country.

Then the duke, now master of the country, came down upon Maestricht.^c The investment of Maestricht was commenced upon the 12th of March, 1579. In the city, besides the population, there were two thousand peasants, both men and women, a garrison of one thousand soldiers, and a trained burgher guard numbering about twelve hundred. The name of the military commandant was Melchior. Sebastian Tappin, a Lorraine officer, was, in truth, the principal director of the operations.

After a heavy cannonade from forty-six great guns, continued for several days, a portion of the brick curtain had crumbled, but through the breach was seen a massive terreplein, well moated, which, after six thousand shots already delivered on the outer wall, still remained uninjured. Four thousand miners, who had passed half their lives in burrowing for coal in that anthracite region, had been furnished by the bishop of Liège, and this force was now set to their subterranean work. A mine having been opened at a distance, the besiegers slowly worked their way towards the Tongres gate, while at the same time the more ostensible operations were in the opposite direction. The besieged had their miners also, for the peasants in the city had been used to work with mattock and pickaxe. The women, too, enrolled themselves into companies, chose their officers — or “mine-mistresses,” as they were called — and did good service daily in the caverns of the earth.

Subterranean Fighting

Thus a whole army of gnomes were noiselessly at work to destroy and defend the beleaguered city. The contending forces met daily, in deadly encounter, within these sepulchral gangways. The citizens secretly constructed a dam across the Spanish mine, and then deluged their foe with hogsheads of boiling water. Hundreds were thus scalded to death. They heaped branches and light fagots in the hostile mine, set fire to the pile, and blew thick volumes of smoke along the passage with organ bellows, brought from the churches for the purpose. Many were thus suffocated.

The discomfited besiegers abandoned the mine where they had met with such able countermining, and sank another shaft, at midnight, in secret. They worked their way, unobstructed, till they arrived at their subterranean port, directly beneath the doomed ravelin. Here they constructed a spacious chamber, supporting it with columns, and making all their architectural arrangements with as much precision and elegance as if their object had been purely æsthetic. Coffers full of powder, to an enormous amount, were then placed in every direction. The explosion was prodigious; a part of the tower fell with the concussion, and the moat was choked with heaps of

rubbish. The assailants sprang across the passage thus afforded, and mastered the ruined portion of the fort.

On the 8th of April, after uniting in prayer, and listening to a speech from Alessandro Farnese, the great mass of the Spanish army advanced to the breach. The tried veterans of Spain, Italy, and Burgundy were met face to face by the burghers of Maestricht, together with their wives and children. All were armed to the teeth, and fought with what seemed superhuman valour. The women, fierce as tigresses defending their young, swarmed to the walls, and fought in the foremost rank. They threw pails of boiling water on the besiegers, they hurled firebrands in their faces, they quitted blazing pitch-hoops with unerring dexterity about their necks. The rustics too, armed with their ponderous flails, worked as cheerfully at this bloody harvesting as if threshing their corn at home.

A new mine — which was to have been sprung between the ravelin and the gate, but which had been secretly countermined by the town people, exploded with a horrible concussion, at a moment least expected by the besiegers. Ortiz, a Spanish captain of engineers, who had been inspecting the excavations, was thrown up bodily from the subterranean depth. He fell back again instantly into the same cavern, and was buried by the returning shower of earth which had spouted from the mine. Forty-five years afterwards, in digging for the foundations of a new wall, his skeleton was found. Clad in complete armour, the helmet and cuirass still sound, with his gold chain around his neck, and his mattock and pickaxe at his feet, the soldier lay un mutilated, seeming almost capable of resuming his part in the same war which, even after his half-century sleep, was still ravaging the land.

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

Alessandro reluctantly gave the signal of recall at last, and accepted the defeat. For the future he determined to rely more upon the sapper and miner. His numerous army was well housed and amply supplied, and he had built a strong and populous city in order to destroy another. Relief was impossible.

At length, on June 29th, after three months of siege, the Spanish forced their way through a breach, and surprised at last — in its sleep — the city which had so long and vigorously defended itself. The battle, as usual when Netherland towns were surprised by Philip's soldiers, soon changed to a massacre. Women, old men, and children had all been combatants; and all, therefore, had incurred the vengeance of the conquerors. Women were pursued from house to house, and hurled from roof and window. They were hunted into the river; they were torn limb from limb in the streets. Men and children fared no better; but the heart sickens at the oft-repeated tale. Horrors, alas, were commonplaces in the Netherlands.

On the first day four thousand men and women were slaughtered. The massacre lasted two days longer; nor would it be an exaggerated estimate, if we assume that the amount of victims upon the last two days was equal to half the number sacrificed on the first.¹ It was said that not four hundred

¹ Strada puts the total number of inhabitants of Maestricht slain during the siege at eight thousand, of whom seventeen hundred were women.

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citizens were left alive after the termination of the siege.¹ These soon wandered away, their places being supplied by a rabble rout of Walloon sutlers and vagabonds. Maestricht was depopulated as well as captured.

ORANGE BECOMES STADHOLDER OF FLANDERS

The prince of Orange, as usual, was blamed for the tragical termination to this long drama. All that one man could do he had done to awaken his countrymen to the importance of the siege. He had repeatedly brought the subject solemnly before the assembly, and implored for Maestricht, almost upon his knees. Now that the massacre to be averted was accomplished, men were loud in reproof, who had been silent and passive while there was yet time to speak and to work.

To save himself, they insinuated, he was now plotting to deliver the land into the power of the treacherous Frenchman, and he alone, they asserted, was the insuperable obstacle to an honourable peace with Spain.

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

Meantime, his efforts had again and again been demanded to restore order in that abode of anarchy, the city of Ghent. Early in March however, that master of misrule, Jan van Hembyze, had once more excited the populace to sedition. Again the property of Catholics, clerical and lay, was plundered again the persons of Catholics, of every degree, were maltreated. The magistrates, with first senator Hembyze at their head, rather encouraged than rebuked the disorder. Hembyze, fearing the influence of the prince, indulged in open-mouthed abuse of a man whose character he was unable even to comprehend. In all the insane ravings, the demagogue was most ably seconded by the ex-monk. Incessant and unlicensed were the invectives hurled by Peter Dathen from his pulpit upon William the Silent's head. He denounced him — as he had often done before — as an atheist in heart; as a

¹ Not more than three or four hundred, says Bor.⁶ Not more than four hundred, says Hooft.⁷ Not three hundred, says Meteren.⁸ This must of course be an exaggeration, for the population had numbered thirty-four thousand at the commencement of the siege. At any rate, the survivors were but a remnant, and they all wandered away. The place, which had been so recently a very thriving and industrious town, remained a desert. During the ensuing winter most of the remaining buildings were torn down, that the timber and woodwork might be used as firewood by the soldiers and vagabonds who from time to time housed there.

man who changed his religion as easily as his garments¹; as a man who knew no God but state expediency, which was the idol of his worship; a mere politician, who would tear his shirt from his back and throw it in the fire, if he thought it were tainted with religion.

Such witless but vehement denunciation from a preacher who was both popular and comparatively sincere could not but affect the imagination of the weaker portion of his hearers. The faction of Hembyze became triumphant. By the influence of Ryhove, however, a messenger was despatched to Antwerp in the name of a considerable portion of the community of Ghent. The counsel and the presence of the man to whom all hearts in every part of the Netherlands instinctively turned in the hour of need were once more invoked.

The prince again addressed them in language which none but he could employ with such effect. He told them that his life, passed in service and sacrifice, ought to witness sufficiently for his fidelity. As for the matter of religion it was almost incredible that there should be any who doubted the zeal which he bore the religion for which he had suffered so much. "I desire," he continued fervently, "that men should compare that which has been done by my accusers during the ten years past with that which I have done. In that which touches the true advancement of religion, I will yield to no man. They who so boldly accuse me have no liberty of speech, save that which has been acquired for them by the blood of my kindred, by my labours, and my excessive expenditures. To me they owe it that they dare speak at all." This letter (which was dated on the 24th of July, 1579) contained an assurance that the writer was about to visit Ghent.

On the following day, Hembyze executed a *coup d'état*. Having a body of near two thousand soldiers at his disposal, he suddenly secured the persons of all the magistrates and other notable individuals not friendly to his policy, and then, in violation of all law, set up a new board of eighteen irresponsible functionaries, according to a list prepared by himself alone.

The prince came to Ghent, August 18th, 1579, great as had been the efforts of Hembyze and his partisans to prevent his coming. His presence was like magic. The demagogue and his whole flock vanished like unclean birds at the first rays of the sun. Orange rebuked the populace in the strong and indignant language that public and private virtue, energy, and a high purpose enabled such a leader of the people to use. He at once set aside the board of eighteen — the Grecian-Roman-Genevese establishment of Hembyze — and remained in the city until the regular election, in conformity with the privileges, had taken place. In company with his clerical companion, Peter Dathen, Hembyze fled to the abode of John Kasimir, who received both with open arms, and allowed them each a pension.

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

FURTHER SECESSION FROM THE CAUSE

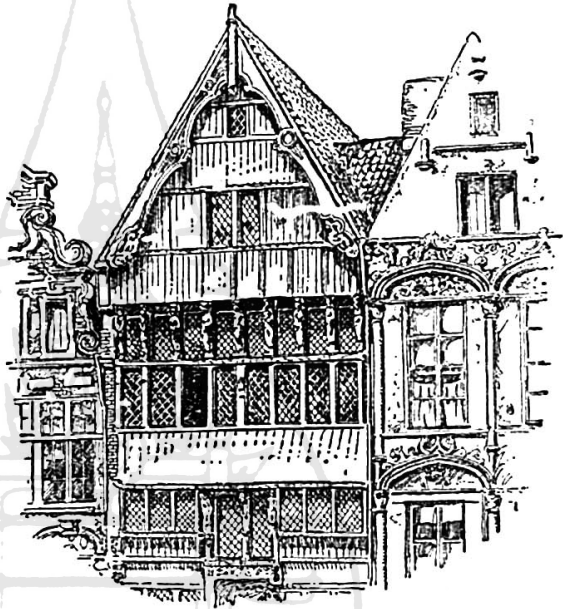
The states-general in session at Antwerp had not made any serious efforts to support the heroic defence of Maestricht, as we have seen. The assembly

[¹ So Strada^d says: "Whether he wrote truth, and was indeed a Calvinist in opinion; or rather by that means sought to ingratiate himself with the men whose service he had use of, some have made a doubt: it is most probable his religion was but pretended, which he could put on like a cloak, to serve him for such a time, and put it off again when it was out of fashion."]

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was divided in opinion and stripped of all authority. Under its very eyes fanatical preachers had incited the populace to fresh violence against the clergy. On Ascension Day, a Catholic procession had been attacked and dispersed in spite of the archduke Matthias' presence. This was an added grievance for the malcontents, and on the 19th of May, 1579, the deputies of Hainault and Artois as well as of French Flanders had concluded a treaty with the duke of Parma. By this treaty the provinces returned to the king's authority and rejected all other creeds than the Catholic religion, but they exacted that he should send his foreign troops out of the country, and he was compelled to put this hard condition into execution immediately after the capture of Maestricht[†].

It was not the Walloon provinces alone that returned to the king's side; Mechlin passed about the same time over to the duke of Parma, and Bois-le-Duc opened its gate to him as well after a struggle between the Catholic and Protestant townspeople. Similar trouble took place at Bruges, and the preachers were driven out by the inhabitants. But a body of Scotch troops, in the service of the states, threw itself upon the town and prevented its being given over to Parma's soldiers. Some of the nobles[†] who hitherto had fought under the banner of the confederation also came to terms with the duke of Parma when they saw vanish the hopes of pacification roused by a congress assembled at Cologne, through the emperor's efforts. One of them who thus set the example was the duke of Aerschot, who had taken part in the congress as a delegate from the provinces still under arms.



OLD HOUSES OF MECHLIN

These successes, as important as they were rapid, frightened the estates; of the large force they had raised the year before but a small body remained garrisoned in the towns, for whom there was no means of pay. The prince of Orange, who still retained some influence in the assembly, had recourse to the old expedient of offering the Low Countries to a foreign prince; but this time he proposed first to declare the downfall of Philip. This bold resolution was adopted, in May, 1580, and homage given to the same duke of Aençon and Anjou who had already received the title of protector — a man of slight mind, weak and inconstant, from whom neither firmness nor wisdom could be expected. But he could bring a French army with him and thus provide for the immediate defence of the country; this was probably all that

[[†] Among these was the young count Philip of Egmont, whose father had been executed by Alva; Renneberg, the prince's trusted stadholder in Groningen, turned traitor and was put in command of royalist troops.]

he could be counted on to do. William, however, knew how to reserve the right to serve him as counsel and guide.^c

The war continued in a languid and desultory manner in different parts of the country. At an action near Ingelmunster, the brave and accomplished De la Noue was made prisoner and placed in the castle of Limburg. At last, in June, 1585, he was exchanged, on extremely rigorous terms, for Egmont [who had been captured]. During his captivity in this vile dungeon, De la Noue composed not only his famous political and military discourses but several other works.

The siege of Groningen proceeded, and Parma ordered some forces under Martin Schenk to advance to its relief. On the other hand, the meagre states forces under Sonoy, Hohenlohe, Entes, and Count John of Nassau's young son, William Louis, had not yet made much impression upon the city.

After a few trifling operations before Groningen, Hohenlohe was summoned to the neighbourhood of Koeworden, by the reported arrival of Martin Schenk, at the head of a considerable force. On the 15th of June, the count marched all night and a part of the following morning, in search of the enemy. He came up with them upon Hardenberg Heath, in a broiling summer forenoon. Hohenlohe's army was annihilated in an hour's time, the whole population fled out of Koeworden, the siege of Groningen was raised, Renneberg was set free to resume his operations on a larger scale, and the fate of all the north-eastern provinces was once more swinging in the wind. The boors of Drenthe and Friesland rose again. They had already mustered in the field at an earlier season of the year in considerable force. Calling themselves "the desperates," and bearing on their standard an egg-shell with the yolk running out — to indicate that having lost the meat they were yet ready to fight for the shell — they had swept through the open country, pillaging and burning.

A small war now succeeded, with small generals, small armies, small campaigns, small sieges. For the time, the prince of Orange was even obliged to content himself with such a general as Hohenlohe. As usual, he was almost alone. "*Donec eris felix,*" said he, emphatically —

*multos numerabis amicos,
Tempora cum erunt nubila, nullus erit,*

and he was this summer doomed to a still harder deprivation by the final departure of his brother John from the Netherlands in August, 1580. The count had been wearied out by petty miseries. His stadholderate of Gelderland^d had overwhelmed him with annoyance, for throughout the northeastern provinces there was neither system nor subordination. Never had prætor of a province a more penurious civil list. "The baker has given notice," wrote Count John, in November, "that he will supply no more bread after to-morrow, unless he is paid." The states would furnish no money to pay the bill. It was no better with the butcher. "The cook has often no meat to roast," said the count, in the same letter, "so that we are often obliged to go supperless to bed." His lodgings were a half-roofed, half-finished, unfurnished barrack, where the stadholder passed his winter days and evenings in a small, dark, freezing-cold chamber, often without firewood. Having already loaded himself with a debt of 600,000 florins, which he had spent in the states' service, and having struggled manfully against the petty tortures of his situation, he cannot be severely censured for relinquishing his post.

[^d His office was technically that of "Director of the college of the Nearer Union."]

[1580 A.D.]

Soon afterwards, a special legation, with Sainte-Aldegonde at its head, was despatched to France to consult with the duke of Anjou, and settled terms of agreement with him by the Treaty of Plessis-les-Tours (on the 29th of September, 1580), afterwards definitely ratified by the convention of Bordeaux, signed on the 23rd of the following January.

The states of Holland and Zealand, however, kept entirely aloof from this transaction, being from the beginning opposed to the choice of Anjou. From the first to the last, they would have no master but Orange, and to him, therefore, this year they formally offered the sovereignty of their provinces; but they offered it in vain.

The conquest of Portugal had effected a diversion in the affairs of the Netherlands. It was but a transitory one. From the moment of this conquest, Philip was more disposed, and more at leisure than ever, to vent his wrath against the Netherlands, and against the man whom he considered the incarnation of their revolt.

THE "BAN" AGAINST WILLIAM (1580)

Cardinal Granvella had ever whispered in the king's ear the expediency of taking off the prince by assassination. In accordance with these suggestions and these hopes, the famous ban was drawn up, and dated on the 15th of March, 1580. It was, however, not formally published in the Netherlands until the month of June of the same year.

This edict will remain the most lasting monument to the memory of Cardinal Granvella. It will be read when all his other state-papers and epistles — able as they incontestably are — shall have passed into oblivion. No panegyric of friend, no palliating magnanimity of foe, can roll away this rock of infamy from his tomb. It was by Cardinal Granvella and by Philip that a price was set upon the head of the foremost man of his age, as if he had been a savage beast, and that admission into the ranks of Spain's haughty nobility was made the additional bribe to tempt the assassin.

The ban consisted of a preliminary narrative to justify the penalty.

"For these causes," concluded the ban, "we declare him traitor and miscreant, enemy of ourselves and of the country. As such we banish him perpetually from all our realms, forbidding all our subjects, of whatever quality, to communicate with him openly or privately — to administer to him victuals, drink, fire, or other necessaries. We allow all to injure him in property or life. We expose the said William Nassau as an enemy of the human race — giving his property to all who may seize it. And if any one of our subjects or any stranger should be found sufficiently generous of heart to rid us of this pest, delivering him to us, alive or dead, or taking his life, we will cause to be furnished to him immediately after the deed shall have been done, the sum of twenty-five thousand crowns in gold. If he have committed any crime, however heinous, we promise to pardon him; and if he be not already noble, we will ennoble him for his valour."

THE "APOLOGY" OF WILLIAM

Such was the celebrated ban against the prince of Orange. It was answered before the end of the year by the memorable *Apology of the Prince of Orange*, one of the most startling documents in history. No defiance was ever thundered forth in the face of a despot in more terrible tones. It had become sufficiently manifest to the royal party that the prince was not to be

purchased by "millions of money," or by unlimited family advancement — not to be cajoled by flattery or offers of illustrious friendship. It had been decided, therefore, to terrify him into retreat or to remove him by murder. The government had been thoroughly convinced that the only way to finish the revolt, was to "finish Orange," according to the ancient advice of Antonio Perez. The rupture being thus complete, it was right that the "wretched hypocrite" should answer ban with ban, royal denunciation with sublime scorn. He had ill deserved, however, the title of hypocrite, he said. When the friend of government, he had warned them that by their complicated and perpetual persecutions they were twisting the rope of their own ruin. Was that hypocrisy? Since becoming their enemy, there had likewise been little hypocrisy found in him — unless it was hypocrisy to make open war upon government, to take their cities, to expel their armies from the country.

The proscribed rebel, towering to a moral and even social superiority over the man who affected to be his master by right divine, repudiated the idea of a king in the Netherlands. The word might be legitimate in Castile, or Naples, or the Indies, but the provinces knew no such title. Philip had inherited in those countries only the power of duke or count — a power closely limited by constitutions more ancient than his birthright. Orange was no rebel then — Philip no legitimate monarch. Even were the prince rebellious, it was no more than Philip's ancestor, Albert of Austria, had been towards his anointed sovereign, emperor Adolphus of Nassau, ancestor of William. The ties of allegiance and conventional authority being severed, it had become idle for the king to affect superiority of lineage to the man whose family had occupied illustrious stations when the Habsburgs were obscure squires in Switzerland, and had ruled as sovereign in the Netherlands before that overshadowing house had ever been named.

But whatever the hereditary claims of Philip in the country, he had forfeited them by the violation of his oaths, by his tyrannical suppression of the charters of the land; while by his personal crimes he had lost all pretension to sit in judgment upon his fellow man. Was a people not justified in rising against authority when all their laws had been trodden under foot, "not once only, but a million of times"? — and was William of Orange, lawful husband of the virtuous Charlotte de Bourbon, to be denounced for moral delinquency by a lascivious, incestuous, adulterous, and murderous king? With horrible distinctness he laid before the monarch all the crimes of which he believed him guilty, and having thus told Philip to his beard, "thus didst thou," he had a withering word for the priest who stood at his back. "Tell me," he cried, "by whose command Cardinal Granvella administered poison to Emperor Maximilian? I know what the emperor told me, and how much fear he felt afterwards for the king and for all Spaniards."

He ridiculed the effrontery of men like Philip and Granvella in charging "distrust upon others, when it was the very atmosphere of their own existence." He proclaimed that sentiment to be the only salvation for the country. He reminded Philip of the words which his namesake of Macedon — a school-boy in tyranny, compared to himself — had heard from the lips of Demosthenes — that the strongest fortress of a free people against a tyrant was distrust. That sentiment, worthy of eternal memory, the prince declared that he had taken from the "divine philippic," to engrave upon the heart of the nation, and he prayed God that he might be more readily believed than the great orator had been by his people. He treated with scorn the price set upon his head, ridiculing this project to terrify him, for its want of novelty, and asking the monarch if he supposed the rebel ignorant of the

[1580-1581 A.D.]

various bargains which had frequently been made before with cut-throats and poisoners to take away his life. "I am in the hand of God," said William of Orange; "my worldly goods and my life have been long since dedicated to his service. He will dispose of them as seems best for his glory and my salvation."

On the contrary, however, if it could be demonstrated, or even hoped, that his absence would benefit the cause of the country, he proclaimed himself ready to go into exile. "Would to God," said he, in conclusion, "that my perpetual banishment, or even my death, could bring you a true deliverance from so many calamities. Oh, how consoling would be such banishment — how sweet such a death! For why have I exposed my property? Was it that I might enrich myself? Why have I lost my brothers? Was it that I might find new ones? Why have I left my son so long a prisoner? Can you give me another? Why have I put my life so often in danger? What reward can I hope after my long services, and the almost total wreck of my earthly fortunes, if not the prize of having acquired, perhaps at the expense of my life, your liberty? If then, my masters, you judge that my absence or my death can serve you, behold me ready to obey. Command me — send me to the ends of the earth — I will obey. Here is my head, over which no prince, no monarch, has power but yourselves. Dispose of it for your good, for the preservation of your republic, but if you judge that the moderate amount of experience and industry which is in me, if you judge that the remainder of my property and of my life can yet be a service to you, I dedicate them afresh to you and to the country."¹

His motto — most appropriate to his life and character — "*Je maintiendrai*," was the concluding phrase of the document. His arms and signature were also formally appended, and the *Apology*, translated into most modern languages, was sent to nearly every potentate in Christendom. It had been previously, on the 13th of December, 1580, read before the assembly of the united states at Delft, and approved as cordially as the ban was indignantly denounced.

ALLEGIANCE TO PHILIP FORMALLY RENOUNCED (1581)

During the remainder of the year 1580, and the half of the following year, the seat of hostilities was mainly in the northeast — Parma, while waiting the arrival of fresh troops, being inactive. The operations, like the armies and the generals, were petty. Hohenlohe was opposed to Renneberg. After a few insignificant victories, the latter laid siege to Steenwijk. Upon the 22nd of February, 1581, at the expiration of the third week, Norris succeeded in victualling the town, and Count Renneberg abandoned the siege in despair.

The subsequent career of that unhappy nobleman was brief. On the 19th of July his troops were signally defeated by Sonoy and Norris, the fugitive royalists retreating into Groningen at the very moment when their general, who had been prevented by illness from commanding them, was

¹ The *Apologie* was drawn up by Villiers, a clergyman of learning and talent. No man, however, at all conversant with the writings and speeches of the prince, can doubt that the entire substance of the famous document was from his own hand. The whole was submitted to him for his final emendations, and it seems by no means certain that it derived anything from the hand of Villiers, save the artistic arrangement of the parts, together with certain inflations of style, by which the general effect is occasionally marred. The appearance of the *Apologie* created both admiration and alarm among the friends of its author. "Now is the Prince a dead man," cried Sainte-Aldegonde, when he read it in France. Blok agrees with Motley^h that "the prince's part in the apology is evident."

receiving the last sacraments. Remorse, shame, and disappointment had literally brought Renneberg to his grave. "His treasure," says Bor,^e a contemporary, "was a nail in his coffin," and on his deathbed he bitterly bemoaned his crime. "Groningen! Groningen! would that I had never seen thy walls!" he cried repeatedly in his last hours. He refused to see his sister, whose insidious counsels had combined with his own evil passions to make him a traitor; and he died on the 23rd of July, 1581, repentant and submissive.¹

Philip was in Portugal, preparing for his coronation in that new kingdom — an event to be nearly contemporaneous with his deposition from the Netherland sovereignty, so solemnly conferred upon him a quarter of a century before in Brussels. He committed the profound error of sending the duchess Margaret of Parma to the Netherlands again. The Netherlanders were very moderately excited by the arrival of their former regent, but the prince of Parma was furious. He was unflinching in his determination to retain all the power or none. The duchess, as docile to her son after her arrival as she had been to the king on undertaking the journey, and feeling herself unequal to the task imposed upon her, implored Philip's permission to withdraw, but continued to reside there under an assumed name until the autumn of 1583, when she was at last permitted to return to Italy.

During the summer of 1581 the same spirit of persecution which had inspired the Catholics to inflict such infinite misery upon those of the reformed faith in the Netherlands began to manifest itself in overt acts against the papists by those who had at last obtained political ascendancy over them. Edicts were published in Antwerp, in Utrecht, and in different cities of Holland, suspending the exercise of the Roman worship. These statutes were certainly a long way removed in horror from those memorable placards which sentenced the Reformers by thousands to the axe, the cord, and the stake, but it was still melancholy to see the persecuted becoming persecutors in their turn.

A most important change was now to take place in the prince's condition, a most vital measure was to be consummated by the provinces. The step, which could never be retraced, was, after long hesitation, finally taken upon the 26th of July, 1581, upon which day the united provinces, assembled at the Hague, solemnly declared their independence of Philip, and renounced their allegiance for ever.

This act was accomplished with the deliberation due to its gravity. At the same time it left the country in a very divided condition. The Walloon provinces had already fallen off from the cause, notwithstanding the entreaties of the prince. The other Netherlands, after long and tedious negotiation with Anjou, had at last consented to his supremacy, but from this arrangement Holland and Zealand held themselves aloof. They were willing to contract with him and with their sister provinces — over which he was soon to exercise authority — a firm and perpetual league, but as to their own chief, their hearts were fixed. The prince of Orange should be their lord and master, and none other. It lay only in his self-denying character that he had not been clothed with this dignity long before.

As it was evident that the provinces, thus bent upon placing him at their head, could by no possibility be induced to accept the sovereignty of Anjou — as, moreover, the act of renunciation of Philip could no longer be deferred,

[¹ Renneberg was succeeded as commander of the royalists, by Francesco de Verdugo, but, as Blok¹ says, guerrilla war prevailed since "both sides were hampered by lack of money and men."]

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the prince of Orange reluctantly and provisionally accepted the supreme power over Holland and Zeeland. This arrangement was finally accomplished upon the 24th of July, 1581, and the act of abjuration took place two days afterwards. The offer of the sovereignty over the other united provinces had been accepted by Anjou six months before. Thus the Netherlands were divided into three portions—the reconciled provinces, the united provinces under Anjou, and the northern provinces under Orange; the last division forming the germ, already nearly developed, of the coming republic.

WILLIAM BECOMES SOVEREIGN OF HOLLAND (1581)

The sovereignty thus pressing offered, and thus limited as to time [to the end of the war], was finally accepted by William of Orange, according to a formal act dated at the Hague, 5th of July, 1581, but no powers were conferred by this new instrument beyond those already exercised by the prince. It was as it were a formal continuance of the functions which he had exercised since 1576 as the King's stadholder, according to his old commission of 1555, although a vast difference existed in reality. The limitation as to time was, moreover, soon afterwards secretly, and without the knowledge of Orange, cancelled by the states. They were determined that the prince should be their sovereign — if they could make him so — for the term of his life.

The offer having thus been made and accepted upon the 5th of July, oaths of allegiance and fidelity were exchanged between the prince and the states upon the 24th of the same month. Two days afterwards, upon the 26th of July, 1581, the memorable declaration of independence was issued by the deputies of the united provinces, then solemnly assembled at the Hague. It was called the Act of Abjuration.

The document by which the provinces renounced their allegiance was not the most felicitous of their state papers. It was too prolix and technical. Its style had more of the formal phraseology of legal documents than befitted this great appeal to the whole world and to all time. Nevertheless, this is but matter of taste. The Netherlanders were so eminently a law-abiding people, that, like the American patriots of the eighteenth century, they on most occasions preferred punctilious precision to florid declamation. They chose to conduct their revolt according to law. At the same time, while thus decently wrapping herself in conventional garments, the spirit of Liberty revealed none the less her majestic proportions.

At the very outset of the Abjuration, these fathers of the republic laid down wholesome truths, which at that time seemed startling blasphemies in the ears of Christendom. "All mankind know," said the preamble, "that a prince is appointed by God to cherish his subjects, even as a shepherd to guard his sheep. When, therefore, the prince does not fulfil his duty as protector; when he oppresses his subjects, destroys their ancient liberties, and treats them as slaves, he is to be considered, not a prince, but a tyrant. As such, the estates of the land may lawfully and reasonably depose him, and elect another in his room."

Having enunciated these maxims, the estates proceeded to apply them to their own case, and certainly never was an ampler justification for renouncing a prince since princes were first instituted. The states ran through the history of the past quarter of a century, patiently accumulating a load of charges against the monarch, a tithe of which would have furnished cause for his dethronement. Without passion or exaggeration they told

the world their wrongs. The picture was not highly coloured. On the contrary, it was rather a feeble than a striking portrait of the monstrous iniquity which had so long been established over them.

They calmly observed, after this recital, that they were sufficiently justified in forsaking a sovereign who for more than twenty years had forsaken them. Obeying the law of nature — desirous of maintaining the rights, charters, and liberties of their fatherland — determined to escape from slavery to Spaniards — and making known their decision to the world, they declared the king of Spain deposed from his sovereignty, and proclaimed that they should recognise thenceforth neither his title nor jurisdiction. Three days afterwards, on the 29th of July, the assembly adopted a formula by which all persons were to be required to signify their abjuration.¹

Such were the forms by which the united provinces threw off their allegiance to Spain, and *ipso facto* established a republic, which was to flourish for two centuries. This result, however, was not exactly foreseen by the congress which deposed Philip. The fathers of the commonwealth did not baptise it by the name of "republic." They did not contemplate a change in their form of government. They had neither an aristocracy nor a democracy in their thoughts. Like the actors in the American national drama, these Netherland patriots were struggling to sustain, not to overthrow; unlike them, they claimed no theoretical freedom for humanity — promulgated no doctrine of popular sovereignty: they insisted merely on the fulfilment of actual contracts, signed, sealed, and sworn to by many successive sovereigns. The deposition and election could be legally justified only by the inherent right of the people to depose and to elect; yet the provinces, in their declaration of independence, spoke of the divine right of kings, even while dethroning, by popular right, their own king!

So also, in the instructions given by the states to their envoys charged to justify the abjuration before the imperial diet held at Augsburg, twelve months later, the highest ground was claimed for the popular right to elect or depose the sovereign, while at the same time kings were spoken of as "appointed by God." It is true that they were described in the same clause as "chosen by the people" — which was, perhaps, as exact a concurrence in the maxim of *Vox populi vox Dei*, as the boldest democrat of the day could demand.

Such, then, being the spirit which prompted the provinces upon this great occasion, it may be asked who were the men who signed a document of such importance? In whose name and by what authority did they act against the sovereign? The signers of the declaration of independence acted in the name and by the authority of the Netherland people. The states were the constitutional representatives of that people.² The statesmen of that day, discovering, upon cold analysis of facts, that Philip's sovereignty was legally forfeited, formally proclaimed that forfeiture. Then inquiring what had become of the sovereignty, they found it not in the mass of the people, but

¹ It ran as follows: "I solemnly swear that I will henceforward not respect, nor obey, nor recognise the king of Spain as my prince and master; but that I renounce the king of Spain, and abjure the allegiance by which I may have formerly been bound to him. At the same time I swear fidelity to the United Netherlands — to wit, the provinces of Brabant, Flanders, Gelderland, Holland, Zealand, etc., and also to the national council established by the estates of these provinces; and promise my assistance according to the best of my abilities against the king of Spain and his adherents."

² Blok points out the great importance in future history of this idea that "the origin of sovereignty was not vested in the lord of the land, but in the states as representing the subjects."]

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in the representative body, which actually personated the people. The states of the different provinces — consisting of the knights, nobles, and burghesses of each — sent, accordingly, their deputies to the general assembly at the Hague, and by this congress the decree of abjuration was issued.

The want of personal ambition on the part of William the Silent inflicted perhaps a serious damage upon his country. He believed a single chief requisite for the united states; he might have been, but always refused to become that chief; and yet he has been held up for centuries by many writers as a conspirator and a self-seeking intriguer. "It seems to me," said he, with equal pathos and truth, upon one occasion, "that I was born in this bad planet that all which I do might be misinterpreted." The people worshipped him, and there was many an occasion when his election would have been carried with enthusiasm. Said John of Nassau, "He refuses only on this account — that it may not be thought that, instead of religious freedom for the country, he has been seeking a kingdom for himself and his own private advancement. Moreover, he believes that the connection with France will be of more benefit to the country and to Christianity than if a peace should be made with Spain, or than if he should himself accept the sovereignty, as he is desired to do."

The unfortunate negotiations with Anjou, to which no man was more opposed than Count John, proceeded therefore. In the meantime, the sovereignty over the united provinces was provisionally held by the national council, and, at the urgent solicitation of the states-general, by the prince. The archduke Matthias, whose functions were most unceremoniously brought to an end by the transactions which we have been recording, took his leave of the states, and departed in the month of October. Brought to the country a beardless boy, by the intrigues of a faction who wished to use him as a tool against William of Orange, he had quietly submitted, on the contrary, to serve as the instrument of that great statesman. His personality during his residence was null, and he had to expiate, by many a petty mortification, by many a bitter tear, the boyish ambition which brought him to the Netherlands. The states voted him, on his departure, a pension of fifty thousand guildens annually, which was probably not paid with exemplary regularity.

By midsummer the duke of Anjou made his appearance in the western part of the Netherlands. The prince of Parma had recently come from Cambray with the intention of reducing that important city. On the arrival of Anjou, however, at the head of five thousand cavalry — nearly all of them gentlemen of high degree, serving as volunteers — and of twelve thousand infantry, Alessandro raised the siege precipitately, and retired towards Tournay. Anjou victualled the city, strengthened the garrison, and then, as his cavalry had only enlisted for a summer's amusement, and could no longer be held together, he disbanded his forces. The bulk of the infantry took service for the states under the prince of Espinoy, governor of Tournay. The duke himself, finding that, notwithstanding the treaty of Plessis-les-Tours and the present showy demonstration upon his part, the states were not yet prepared to render him formal allegiance, and being, moreover, in the heyday of what was universally considered his prosperous courtship of Queen Elizabeth, soon afterwards took his departure for England.

Parma, being thus relieved of his interference, soon afterwards laid siege to the important city of Tournay. The prince of Espinoy was absent with the army in the north, but the princess commanded in his absence. She fulfilled her duty in a manner worthy of the house from which she sprang, for the blood of Count Horn was in her veins. The princess appeared daily

among her troops, superintending the defences, and personally directing the officers.

The siege lasted two months. The princess made an honourable capitulation with Parma. She herself, with all her garrison, was allowed to retire with personal property, and with all the honours of war, while the sack of the city was commuted for one hundred thousand crowns, levied upon the inhabitants. The princess, on leaving the gates, was received with such a shout of applause from the royal army that she seemed less like a defeated commander than a conqueror. Upon the 30th November, Parma accordingly entered the place which he had been besieging since the 1st of October.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF ANJOU

The states sent a special mission to England, to arrange with the duke of Anjou for his formal installation as sovereign. Sainte-Aldegonde and other commissioners were already there. It was the memorable epoch in the Anjou wooing, when the rings were exchanged between Elizabeth and the duke, and when the world thought that the nuptials were on the point of being celebrated.

Nevertheless, the marriage ended in smoke. There were plenty of tournaments, pageants, and banquets; a profusion of nuptial festivities, in short, where nothing was omitted but the nuptials. By the end of January, 1582, the duke was no nearer the goal than upon his arrival three months before. Acceding, therefore, to the wishes of the Netherland envoys he prepared for a visit to their country, where the ceremony of his joyful entrance (*La Joyeuse Entrée*) as duke of Brabant and sovereign of the other provinces was to take place. No open rupture with Elizabeth occurred.

On the 10th of February, 1582, fifteen large vessels cast anchor at Flushing. The duke of Anjou, attended by the earl of Leicester, the lords Hunsdon, Willoughby, Sheffield, Howard, Sir Philip Sidney, and many other personages of high rank and reputation, landed from this fleet. He was greeted on his arrival by the prince of Orange. Francis Hercules, son of France, duke of Alençon and Anjou, was at that time just twenty-eight years of age; yet not even his flatterers, or his "minions," of whom he had as regular a train as his royal brother, could claim for him the external graces of youth or of princely dignity. It was thought that his revolting appearance was the principal reason for the rupture of the English marriage, and it was in vain that his supporters maintained that if he could forgive her age, she might, in return, excuse his ugliness.

No more ignoble yet more dangerous creature had yet been loosed upon the devoted soil of the Netherlands. With a figure which was insignificant, and a countenance which was repulsive, he had hoped to efface the impression made upon Elizabeth's imagination by the handsomest man in Europe. With a commonplace capacity, and with a narrow political education, he intended to circumvent the most profound statesman of his age. And there, upon the pier at Flushing, he stood between them both; between the magnificent Leicester, whom he had thought to outshine, and the silent prince of Orange, whom he was determined to outwit.

The terms of the treaty concluded at Plessis-les-Tours and Bordeaux were now made public. The duke had subscribed to twenty-seven articles, which made as stringent and sensible a constitutional compact as could be desired by any Netherland patriot. These articles, taken in connection with the ancient charters which they expressly upheld, left to the new sovereign no

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vestige of arbitrary power. He was merely the hereditary president of a representative republic. He was to be duke, count, marquis, or seignior of the different provinces on the same terms which his predecessors had accepted. He was to transmit the dignities to his children. If there were more than one child, the provinces were to select one of the number for their sovereign. He was to maintain all the ancient privileges, charters, statutes, and customs, and to forfeit his sovereignty at the first violation. He was to assemble the states-general at least once a year. He was always to reside in the Netherlands. He was to permit none but natives to hold office. His right of appointment to all important posts was limited to a selection from three candidates, to be proposed by the states of the province concerned, at each vacancy. He was to maintain "the religion" and the "religious peace" in the same state in which they then were, or as should afterwards be ordained by the states of each province, without making any innovation on his own part. Holland and Zealand were to remain as they were, both in the matter of religion and otherwise. His highness was not to permit that anyone should be examined or molested in his house, or otherwise, in the matter or under pretext of religion. He was to procure the assistance of the king of France for the Netherlands. He was to maintain a perfect and a perpetual league, offensive and defensive, between that kingdom and the provinces; without, however, permitting any incorporation of territory. He was to carry on the war against Spain with his own means and those furnished by his royal brother, in addition to a yearly contribution by the estates of 2,400,000 guildens. He was to dismiss all troops at command of the states-general. He was to make no treaty with Spain without their consent.

ATTEMPTS TO ASSASSINATE WILLIAM

The first-fruits of the ban now began to display themselves. Sunday, 18th of March, 1582, was the birthday of the duke of Anjou, and a great festival had been arranged, accordingly, for the evening, at the palace of St. Michael, the prince of Orange as well as all the great French lords being of course invited. On rising from the table, Orange led the way from the dining-room to his own apartments. As he stood upon the threshold of the antechamber, a youth offered him a petition. He took the paper, and as he did so, the stranger suddenly drew a pistol and discharged it at the head of the prince. The ball entered the neck under the right ear, passed through the roof of the mouth, and came out under the left jawbone, carrying with it two teeth. The pistol had been held so near that the hair and beard of the prince were set on fire by the discharge. He remained standing, but blinded, stunned, and for a moment entirely ignorant of what had occurred. As he afterwards observed, he thought perhaps that a part of the house had suddenly fallen. Finding very soon that his hair and beard were burning, he comprehended what had occurred, and called out quickly, "Do not kill him — I forgive him my death!" and turning to the French noblemen present, he added, "Alas! what a faithful servant does his highness lose in me!"

These were his first words, spoken when, as all believed, he had been mortally wounded. The message of mercy came, however, too late; for two of the gentlemen present, by an irresistible impulse, had run the assassin through with their rapiers. The halberdiers rushed upon him immediately afterwards, so that he fell pierced in thirty-two vital places. The prince, supported by his friends, walked to his chamber, where he was put to bed, while the surgeons examined and bandaged the wound. It was most

dangerous in appearance, but a very strange circumstance gave more hope than could otherwise have been entertained. The flame from the pistol had been so close that it had actually cauterised the wound inflicted by the ball. But for this, it was supposed that the flow of blood from the veins which had been shot through would have proved fatal before the wound could be dressed. The prince, after the first shock, had recovered full possession of his senses, and believing himself to be dying, he expressed the most unaffected sympathy for the condition in which the duke of Anjou would be placed by his death. "Alas, poor prince!" he cried frequently; "alas, what troubles will now beset thee!" The surgeons enjoined and implored his silence, as speaking might cause the wound to prove immediately fatal. He complied, but wrote incessantly. As long as his heart could beat, it was impossible for him not to be occupied with his country.

Sainte-Aldegonde, who had meantime arrived, now proceeded, in company of the other gentlemen, to examine the articles and papers taken from the assassin. The pistol with which he had done the deed was lying upon the floor; a naked poniard, which he would probably have used also, had his thumb not been blown off by the discharge of the pistol, was found in his trunk hose. In his pocket were an *Agnus Dei*, a taper of green wax, two bits of hareskin, two dried toads — which were supposed to be sorcerer's charms — a crucifix, a Jesuit catechism, a prayer-book, a pocket-book containing two Spanish bills of exchange — one for two thousand, and one for eight hundred and seventy-seven crowns — and a set of writing tablets. These last were covered with vows and pious invocations, in reference to the murderous affair which the writer had in hand.

The poor fanatical fool had been taught by deeper villains than himself that his pistol was to rid the world of a tyrant, and to open his own pathway to heaven, if his career should be cut short on earth. To prevent so undesirable a catastrophe to himself, however, his most natural conception had been to bribe the whole heavenly host, from the Virgin Mary downwards, for he had been taught that absolution for murder was to be bought and sold like other merchandise. He had also been persuaded that, after accomplishing the deed, HE WOULD BECOME INVISIBLE.

Sainte-Aldegonde hastened to lay the result of this examination before the duke of Anjou. Information was likewise instantly conveyed to the magistrates at the town-house, and these measures were successful in restoring confidence throughout the city as to the intentions of the new government. Anjou immediately convened the state council, issued a summons for an early meeting of the states-general, and published a proclamation that all persons having information to give concerning the crime which had just been committed, should come instantly forward, upon pain of death. The body of the assassin was forthwith exposed upon the public square, and was soon recognised as that of one Juan Jaureguy, a servant in the employ of Gaspar de Anastro, a Spanish merchant of Antwerp. The letters and bills of exchange had also, on nearer examination at the town-house, implicated Anastro in the affair. His house was immediately searched, but the merchant had taken his departure, upon the previous Tuesday, under pretext of pressing affairs at Calais. His cashier, Venero, and a Dominican friar, named Anthony Zimmermann, both inmates of his family, were, however, arrested upon suspicion. Venero wrote a full confession.

It appeared that the crime was purely a commercial speculation on the part of Anastro. That merchant, being on the verge of bankruptcy, had entered with Philip into a mutual contract, which the king had signed with

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his hand and sealed with his seal, and according to which Anastro, within a certain period, was to take the life of William of Orange, and for so doing was to receive 80,000 ducats, and the cross of Santiago. To be a knight companion of Spain's proudest order of chivalry was the guerdon, over and above the eighty thousand pieces of silver, which Spain's monarch promised the murderer, if he should succeed. The cowardly and crafty principal escaped.

The process against Venero and Zimmermann was rapidly carried through, for both had made a full confession of their share in the crime. The prince had enjoined from his sick-bed, however, that the case should be conducted with strict regard to justice, and, when the execution could no longer be deferred, he had sent a written request, by the hands of Sainte-Aldegonde, that they should be put to death in the least painful manner. The request was complied with, but there can be no doubt that the criminals, had it not been made, would have expiated their offence by the most lingering tortures. Owing to the intercession of the man who was to have been their victim, they were strangled, before being quartered, upon a scaffold erected in the market-place, opposite the town-house. This execution took place on Wednesday, the 28th of March, 1582.

The prince for eighteen days lay in a most precarious state. On the 5th of April the cicatrix by which the flow of blood from the neck had been prevented, almost from the first infliction of the wound, fell off. The veins poured forth a vast quantity of blood; it seemed impossible to check the hæmorrhage, and all hope appeared to vanish. The prince resigned himself to his fate, and bade his children "good-night forever," saying calmly, "it is now all over with me."

It was difficult, without suffocating the patient, to fasten a bandage tightly enough to staunch the wound, but Leonardo Botalli, of Asti, body physician of Anjou, was nevertheless fortunate enough to devise a simple mechanical expedient, which proved successful. By his advice, a succession of attendants, relieving each other day and night, prevented the flow of blood by keeping the orifice of the wound slightly but firmly compressed with the thumb. After a period of anxious expectation, the wound again closed, and by the end of the month the prince was convalescent. On the 2nd of May he went to offer thanksgiving in the Great Cathedral, amid the joyful sobs of a vast and most earnest throng.

The prince was saved, but unhappily the murderer had yet found an illustrious victim. The princess of Orange, Charlotte de Bourbon — the devoted wife who for seven years had so faithfully shared his joys and sorrows — lay already on her death-bed. Exhausted by anxiety, long watching, and the alternations of hope and fear during the first eighteen days, she had been prostrated by despair at the renewed hæmorrhage. A violent fever seized her, under which she sank on the 5th of May, three days after the solemn thanksgiving for her husband's recovery. The prince, who loved her tenderly, was in great danger of relapse upon the sad event, which, although not sudden, had not been anticipated. She was a woman of rare intelligence, accomplishment, and gentleness of disposition, whose only offence had been to break, by her marriage, the church vows to which she had been forced in her childhood, but which had been pronounced illegal by competent authority, both ecclesiastical and lay. For this, and for the contrast which her virtues afforded to the vices of her predecessor, she was the mark of calumny and insult.

The offer of the sovereign countship of Holland was again made to the prince of Orange in most urgent terms. It will be recollected that he had

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accepted the sovereignty on the 5th of July, 1581, only for the term of the war. In a letter, dated Bruges, 14th of August, 1582, he accepted the dignity without limitation. This offer and acceptance, however, constituted but the preliminaries, for it was further necessary that the letters of *renversal* should be drawn up, that they should be formally delivered, and that a new constitution should be laid down, and confirmed by mutual oaths. After these steps had been taken, the ceremonious inauguration or rendering of homage was to be celebrated.

All these measures were duly arranged except the last. The installation of the new count of Holland was prevented by his death, and the northern provinces remained a republic, not only in fact but in name.

THE CONSTITUTION OF 1582

In political matters, the basis of the new constitution was the "Great Privilege" of the lady Mary, the Magna Charta of the country. That memorable monument in the history of the Netherlands and of municipal progress had been overthrown by Mary's son, with the forced acquiescence of the states, and it was therefore stipulated by the new article that even such laws and privileges as had fallen into disuse should be revived. It was furthermore provided that the little state should be a free countship, and should thus silently sever its connection with the empire.

With regard to the position of the prince, as hereditary chief of the little commonwealth, his actual power was rather diminished than increased by his new dignity. By the new constitution he ceased to be the source of governmental life, or to derive his own authority from above by right divine. Orange's sovereignty was from the states, as legal representatives of the people, and instead of exercising all the powers not otherwise granted away, he was content with those especially conferred upon him. He could neither declare war nor conclude peace without the co-operation of the representative body. The appointing power was scrupulously limited.

With respect to the great principle of taxation, stricter bonds even were provided than those which already existed. As executive head, save in his capacity as commander-in-chief by land or sea, the new sovereign was, in short, strictly limited by self-imposed laws. It had rested with him to dictate or to accept a constitution. He had, in his memorable letter of August, 1582, from Bruges, laid down generally the articles prepared at Plessis and Bordeaux, for Anjou — together with all applicable provisions of the joyous entry of Brabant — as the outlines of the constitution for the little commonwealth then forming in the north. To these provisions he was willing to add any others which, after ripe deliberation, might be thought beneficial to the country. Thus limited were his executive functions. As to his judicial authority, it had ceased to exist. The count of Holland was now the guardian of the laws, but the judges were to administer them.

As to the count's legislative authority, it had become co-ordinate with, if not subordinate to, that of the representative body. He was strictly prohibited from interfering with the right of the separate or the general states to assemble as often as they should think proper; and he was also forbidden to summon them outside their own territory. This was one immense step in the progress of representative liberty, and the next was equally important. It was now formally stipulated that the states were to deliberate upon all measures which "concerned justice and polity," and that no change was to

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be made — that is to say, no new law was to pass — without their consent as well as that of the council. Thus, the principle was established of two legislative chambers, with the right, but not the exclusive right, of initiation on the part of government, and in the sixteenth century one would hardly look for broader views of civil liberty and representative government. The foundation of a free commonwealth was thus securely laid, which, had William lived, would have been a representative monarchy, but which his death converted into a federal republic. It was necessary for the sake of unity to give a connected outline of these proceedings with regard to the sovereignty of Orange. The formal inauguration only remained, and this, as will be seen, was forever interrupted.

During the course of the year 1582, the military operations on both sides had been languid and desultory. In consequence, however, of the treaty concluded between the united states and Anjou, Parma had persuaded the Walloon provinces that it had now become absolutely necessary for them to permit the entrance of fresh Italian and Spanish troops. This, then, was the end of the famous provision against foreign soldiery in the Walloon Treaty of Reconciliation.

In the meantime, Farnese, while awaiting these reinforcements, had not been idle, but had been quietly picking up several important cities. Early in the spring he had laid siege to Oudenarde. An attempt upon Lochum, an important city in Gelderland, was unsuccessful, the place being relieved by the duke of Anjou's forces, and Parma's troops forced to abandon the siege. At Steenwijk, the royal arms were more successful. With this event the active operations under Parma closed for the year. By the end of the autumn, however, he had the satisfaction of numbering, under his command, full sixty thousand well-appointed and disciplined troops, including the large reinforcements recently despatched from Spain and Italy. The monthly expense of this army — half of which was required for garrison duty, leaving only the other moiety for field operations — was estimated at six hundred and fifty thousand florins. The forces under Anjou and the united provinces were also largely increased, so that the marrow of the land was again in fair way of being thoroughly exhausted by its defenders and its foes.

The incidents of Anjou's administration, meantime, during the year 1582, had been few and of no great importance. After the pompous and elaborate "homage-making" at Antwerp, he had, in the month of July, been formally accepted, by writing, as duke of Gelderland and lord of Friesland. In the same month he had been ceremoniously inaugurated at Bruges as count of Flanders — an occasion upon which the prince of Orange had been present.

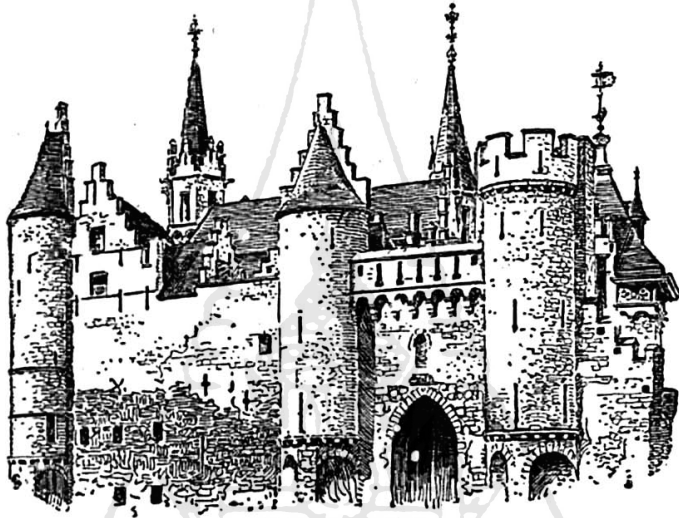
In the midst of this event, an attempt was made upon the lives both of Orange and Anjou. An Italian, named Basa, and a Spaniard, called Salseda, were detected in a scheme to administer poison to both princes, and when arrested, confessed that they had been hired by the prince of Parma to compass this double assassination. Basa destroyed himself in prison. His body was, however, gibbeted, with an inscription that he had attempted, at the instigation of Parma, to take the lives of Orange and Anjou. Salseda, less fortunate, was sent to Paris, where he was found guilty, and executed by being torn to pieces by four horses. Sad to relate, Lamoral Egmont, younger son and namesake of the great general, was intimate with Salseda, and implicated in this base design. His mother, on her death-bed, had especially recommended the youth to the kindly care of Orange. The young noble was imprisoned; his guilt was far from doubtful; but the powerful intercessions of Orange himself, combined with Egmont's near relationship to

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the French queen, saved his life, and he was permitted, after a brief captivity, to take his departure to France.^h

ANJOU'S PLOT AND THE "FRENCH FURY" (1583)

The duke of Anjou, intemperate, inconstant, and unprincipled, saw that his authority was but the shadow of power, compared to the deep-fixed practices of despotism which governed the other nations of Europe. The French officers, who formed his suite and possessed all his confidence, had no difficulty in raising his discontent into treason against the people with



THE STEEN AT ANTWERP—SCENE OF THE INQUISITION

whom he had made a solemn compact. The result of their councils was a deep-laid plot against Flemish liberty; and its execution was ere long attempted. He sent secret orders to the governors of Dunkirk, Bruges, Dendermonde, and other towns, to seize on and hold them in his name; reserving for himself the infamy of the enterprise against Antwerp. To prepare for its execution, he caused his numerous army of French and Swiss to approach the city; and they were encamped in the neighbourhood, at a place called Borgerhout.

On the 17th of January, 1583, the duke dined somewhat earlier than usual, under the pretext of proceeding afterwards to review his army in their camp. He set out at noon, accompanied by his guard of two hundred horse; and when he reached the second drawbridge, one of his officers gave the preconcerted signal for an attack on the Flemish guard, by pretending that he had fallen and broken his leg. The duke called out to his followers, "Courage, courage! the town is ours!" The guard at the gate was all soon despatched; and the French troops, which waited outside to the number of 3,000, rushed quickly in, furiously shouting the war-cry, "Town taken! town taken! kill! kill!" The astonished but intrepid citizens, recovering from their confusion, instantly flew to arms. All differences in religion or politics were forgotten in the common danger to their freedom. Catholics and Protestants, men and women, rushed alike to the conflict.

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The ancient spirit of Flanders seemed to animate all. Workmen, armed with the instruments of their various trades, started from their shops and flung themselves upon the enemy. A baker sprang from the cellar where he was kneading his dough, and with his oven shovel struck a French dragoon to the ground. Those who had fire-arms, after expending their bullets, took from their pouches and pockets pieces of money, which they bent between their teeth, and used for charging their arquebuses. The French were driven successively from the streets and ramparts, and the cannons planted on the latter were immediately turned against the reinforcements which attempted to enter the town. The French were everywhere beaten; the duke of Anjou saved himself by flight, and reached Dendermonde, after the perilous necessity of passing through a large tract of uninhabited country [the citizens of Mechlin having cut the dikes to impede his march]. His loss in this base enterprise amounted to fifteen hundred, while that of the citizens did not exceed eighty men. The attempts simultaneously made on the other towns succeeded at Dunkirk and Dendermonde; but all the others failed.

The character of the prince of Orange never appeared so thoroughly great as at this crisis. With wisdom and magnanimity rarely equalled and never surpassed, he threw himself and his authority between the indignation of the country and the guilt of Anjou; saving the former from excess, and the latter from execration. The disgraced and discomfited duke proffered to the states excuses as mean as they were hypocritical¹; and his brother, the king of France, sent a special envoy to intercede for him. But it was the influence of William that screened the culprit from public reprobation and ruin, and regained for him the place and power which he might easily have secured for himself, had he not prized the welfare of his country far above all objects of private advantage.²

The estates of the Union, being in great perplexity as to their proper course, now applied formally, as they always did in times of danger and doubt, to the prince, for a public expression of his views. Somewhat reluctantly, he complied with their wishes in one of the most admirable of his state papers.

He was far from palliating the crime, or from denying that the duke's rights under the Treaty of Bordeaux had been utterly forfeited. He was now asked what was to be done. Of three courses, he said, one must be taken: they must make their peace with the king, or consent to a reconciliation with Anjou, or use all the strength which God had given them to resist, single-handed, the enemy. The French could do the Netherlands more harm as enemies than the Spaniards.

Two powerful nations like France and Spain would be too much to have on their hands at once. How much danger, too, would be incurred by braving at once the open wrath of the French king and the secret displeasure of the English queen! She had warmly recommended the duke of Anjou. She had said that honours to him were rendered to herself, and she was now entirely opposed to their keeping the present quarrel alive.

The result of these representations by the prince — of frequent letters from Queen Elizabeth, urging a reconciliation — and of the professions made by the duke and the French envoys, was a provisional arrangement, signed on the 26th and 28th of March 1583. The negotiations, however, were languid. The quarrel was healed on the surface, but confidence so recently and violently uprooted was slow to revive. On the 28th of June, the duke

[¹ He ascribed the enterprise partly to accident, and partly to the insubordination of his troops. — MOTLEY.²]

[1583-1584 A. D.]

of Anjou left Dunkirk for Paris, never to return to the Netherlands, but he exchanged on his departure affectionate letters with the prince and the states. M. des Pruneaux remained as his representative, and it was understood that the arrangements for re-installing him as soon as possible in the sovereignty which he had so basely forfeited, were to be pushed forward with earnestness.

On the 12th of April, the prince of Orange was married, for the fourth time, to Louise, widow of the seigneur de Teligny, and daughter of the illustrious Coligny.

In August, 1583, the states of the united provinces assembled at Middelburg formally offered the general government — which under the circumstances was the general sovereignty — to the prince, warmly urging his acceptance of the dignity. Like all other attempts to induce the acceptance, by the prince, of supreme authority, this effort proved ineffectual, from the obstinate unwillingness of his hand to receive the proffered sceptre. But, firmly refusing to heed the overtures of the united states, and of Holland in particular, he continued to further the re-establishment of Anjou — a measure in which, as he deliberately believed, lay the only chance of union and independence.

Parma, meantime, had been busily occupied in the course of the summer in taking up many of the towns which the treason of Anjou had laid open to his attacks. Eindhoven, Diest, Durkirk, Nieupoort, and other places, were successively surrendered to royalist generals. On the 22nd of September, 1583, the city of Zutphen, too, was surprised by Colonel Tassis, on the fall of which most important place the treason of Orange's brother-in-law, Count van den Bergh, governor of Gelderland, was revealed. While treason was thus favouring the royal arms in the north, the same powerful element, to which so much of the Netherland misfortunes had always been owing, was busy in Flanders.

Early in the spring of 1584 a formal resolution was passed by the government of Ghent, to open negotiations with Parma. The whole negotiation was abruptly brought to a close by a new incident, the demagogue Hembyze having been discovered in a secret attempt to obtain possession of the city of Dendermonde, and deliver it to Parma. The old acquaintance, ally and enemy of Hembyze the lord of Ryhove, being thoroughly on his guard, arrested his old comrade, who was shortly afterwards brought to trial and executed at Ghent. Meanwhile the citizens of Ghent, thus warned by word and deed, passed an earnest resolution to have no more intercourse with Parma, but to abide faithfully by the union. Their example was followed by the other Flemish cities, excepting, unfortunately, Bruges, for that important town, being entirely in the power of Chimay, was now surrendered by him to the royal government.

On the 10th of June, 1584, Anjou expired at Château Thierry, in great torture, sweating blood from every pore, and under circumstances which, as usual, suggested strong suspicions of poison.

FURTHER ATTEMPTS ON WILLIAM'S LIFE

It has been seen that the ban against the prince of Orange had not been hitherto without fruits, for, although unsuccessful, the efforts to take his life, and earn the promised guerdon, had been incessant. The attempt of Jaureguy, at Antwerp, of Salseda and Basa at Bruges, have been related, and in March, 1583, moreover, one Pietro Dordogno was executed in Antwerp

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for endeavouring to assassinate the prince. Before his death, he confessed that he had come from Spain solely for the purpose. In April, 1584, Hans Hanzoon, a merchant of Flushing, had been executed for attempting to destroy the prince by means of gunpowder, concealed under his house in that city, and under his seat in the church. Within two years there had been five distinct attempts to assassinate the prince, all of them with the privity of the Spanish government. A sixth was soon to follow.

In the summer of 1584, William of Orange was residing at Delft, where his wife, Louise de Coligny, had given birth, in the preceding winter, to a son, afterwards the celebrated stadholder, Frederick Henry. The child had received these names from his two godfathers, the kings of Denmark and of Navarre, and his baptism had been celebrated with much rejoicing on the 12th of June, in the place of his birth.

Francis Guion, in reality Balhasar Gérard, a fanatical Catholic, before reaching man's estate, had formed the design of murdering the prince of Orange, "who, so long as he lived, seemed like to remain a rebel against the Catholic king, and to make every effort to disturb the repose of the Roman Catholic Apostolic religion." Parma had long been looking for a good man to murder Orange, feeling — as Philip, Granvella, and all former governors of the Netherlands had felt — that this was the only means of saving the royal authority in any part of the provinces. Many unsatisfactory assassins had presented themselves from time to time, and Alessandro had paid money in hand to various individuals — Italians, Spaniards, Lorrainers, Scotchmen, Englishmen — who had generally spent the sums received without attempting the job. Others were supposed to be still engaged in the enterprise, and at that moment there were four persons — each unknown to the others, and of different nations — in the city of Delft, seeking to compass the death of William the Silent. Shag-eared, military, hirsute ruffians — ex-captains of free companies and such marauders — were daily offering their services; there was no lack of them, and they had done but little. How should Parma, seeing this obscure, under-sized, thin-bearded, run-away clerk before him, expect pith and energy from him? He thought him quite unfit for an enterprise of moment, and declared as much to his secret councillors and to the king.

A second letter decided Parma so far that he authorised Assonleville to encourage the young man in his attempt, and to promise that the reward should be given to him in case of success, and to his heirs in the event of his death.

Certain despatches having been entrusted to Gérard, he travelled post haste to Delft, and, to his astonishment, the letters had hardly been delivered before he was summoned in person to the chamber of the prince. Here was an opportunity such as he had never dared to hope for. Gérard, had, moreover, made no preparation for an interview so entirely unexpected, had come unarmed, and had formed no plan for escape. He was obliged to forego his prey when most within his reach. Gérard now came to Delft. It was Sunday morning, and the bells were tolling for church. Upon leaving the house he loitered about the courtyard, furtively examining the premises, so that a sergeant of halberdiers asked him why he was waiting there. Balhasar meekly replied that he was desirous of attending divine worship in the church opposite, but added, pointing to his shabby and travel-stained attire, that, without at least a new pair of shoes and stockings, he was unfit to join the congregation. Insignificant as ever, the small, pious, dusty stranger excited no suspicion in the mind of the good-natured sergeant. He forthwith spoke of the wants of Gérard to an officer, by whom they were

communicated to Orange himself, and the prince instantly ordered a sum of money to be given him. Thus Balthasar obtained from William's charity what Parma's thrift had denied — a fund for carrying out his purpose!

Next morning, with the money thus procured, he purchased a pair of pistols, or small carabines, from a soldier, chaffering long about the price because the vender could not supply a particular kind of chopped bullets or slugs which he desired. Before the sunset of the following day that soldier had stabbed himself to the heart, and died despairing, on hearing for what purpose the pistols had been bought.

On Tuesday, the 10th of July, 1584, at about half-past twelve, the prince, with his wife on his arm, and followed by the ladies and gentlemen of his family, went to the dining-room. At two o'clock the company rose from table. The prince led the way, intending to pass to his private apartments above. He had only reached the second stair, when a man emerged from the sunken arch, and standing within a foot or two of him, discharged a pistol full at his heart. Three balls entered his body, one of which, passing quite through him, struck with violence against the wall beyond. The prince exclaimed in French, as he felt the wound, "O my God, have mercy upon my soul! O my God, have mercy upon this poor people!"

These were the last words he ever spoke, save that when his sister, Catherine of Schwarzburg, immediately afterwards asked him if he commended his soul to Jesus Christ, he faintly answered, "Yes." The prince was then placed on the stairs for an instant, when he immediately began to swoon. He was afterwards laid upon a couch in the dining-room, where in a few minutes he breathed his last in the arms of his wife and sister.

The murderer succeeded in making his escape through the side door, and sped swiftly up the narrow lane. He had almost reached the ramparts, from which he intended to spring into the moat, when he stumbled over a heap of rubbish. As he rose, he was seized by several pages and halberdiers, who had pursued him from the house. He was brought back to the house, where he immediately underwent a preliminary examination before the city magistrates. He was afterwards subjected to excruciating tortures; for the fury against the wretch who had destroyed the Father of the country was uncontrollable, and William the Silent was no longer alive to intercede — as he had often done before — in behalf of those who assailed his life.

After sustaining day after day the most horrible tortures, he conversed with ease, and even eloquence, answering all questions addressed to him with apparent sincerity. His constancy in suffering so astounded his judges that they believed him supported by witchcraft. "*Ecce homo!*" he exclaimed, from time to time, with insane blasphemy, as he raised his blood-streaming head from the bench.

The sentence pronounced against the assassin was execrable — a crime against the memory of the great man whom it professed to avenge. It was decreed that the right hand of Gérard should be burned off with a red-hot iron, that his flesh should be torn from his bones with pincers in six different places, that he should be quartered and disembowelled alive, that his heart should be torn from his bosom and flung in his face, and that, finally, his head should be taken off. Not even his horrible crime, with its endless consequences, nor the natural frenzy of indignation which it had excited, could justify this savage decree, to rebuke which the murdered hero might have almost risen from the sleep of death. The sentence was literally executed on the 14th of July, the criminal supporting its horrors with the same astonishing fortitude.

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The reward promised by Philip to the man who should murder Orange was paid to the heirs of Gérard. Parma informed his sovereign that the "poor man" had been executed, but that his father and mother were still living, to whom he recommended the payment of that "merced" which "the laudable and generous deed had so well deserved." This was accordingly done, and the excellent parents, ennobled and enriched by the crime of their son, received, instead of the twenty-five thousand crowns promised in the ban, the three seigniorics of Lievremont, Hostal, and Dampmartin, in the Franche-Comté, and took their place at once among the landed aristocracy. Thus the bounty of the prince had furnished the weapon by which his life was destroyed, and his estates supplied the fund out of which the assassin's family received the price of blood. At a later day, when the unfortunate eldest son of Orange returned from Spain after twenty-seven years' absence, a changeling and a Spaniard, the restoration of those very estates was offered to him by Philip II, provided he would continue to pay a fixed proportion of their rents to the family of his father's murderer. The education which Philip William had received, under the king's auspices, had, however, not entirely destroyed all his human feelings, and he rejected the proposal with scorn. The estates remained with the Gérard family, and the patents of nobility which they had received were used to justify their exemption from certain taxes, until the union of Franche-Comté with France, when a French governor tore the documents in pieces and trampled them under foot.

William of Orange, at the period of his death, was aged fifty-one years and sixteen days. He left twelve children. By his first wife, Anne of Egmont, he had one son, Philip, and one daughter, Mary, afterwards married to Count Hohenlohe. By his second wife, Anna of Saxony, he had one son, the celebrated Maurice of Nassau, and two daughters, Anna, married afterwards to her cousin, Count William Louis, and Emilia, who espoused Emmanuel, son of the pretender of Portugal. By Charlotte de Bourbon, his third wife, he had six daughters; and by his fourth, Louise de Coligny, one son, Frederick Henry, afterwards stadholder of the republic in her most palmy days. The prince was entombed on the 3rd of August, at Delft, amid the tears of a whole nation. Never was a more extensive, unaffected, and legitimate sorrow felt at the death of any human being.

MOTLEY'S ESTIMATE OF WILLIAM THE SILENT

The life and labours of Orange had established the emancipated commonwealth upon a secure foundation, but his death rendered the union of all the Netherlands into one republic hopeless. The efforts of the malcontent nobles, the religious discord, the consummate ability, both political and military, of Parma, all combined with the lamentable loss of William the Silent, to separate forever the southern and Catholic provinces from the northern confederacy. So long as the prince remained alive, he was the Father of the whole country; the Netherlands — saving only the two Walloon provinces — constituting a whole. Philip and Granvella were right in their estimate of the advantage to be derived from the prince's death; in believing that an assassin's hand could achieve more than all the wiles which Spanish or Italian statesmanship could teach, or all the armies which Spain or Italy could muster.

Had he lived twenty years longer, it is probable that the seven provinces would have been seventeen; and that the Spanish title would have been forever extinguished both in Nether Germany and Celtic Gaul. Although there was to be the length of two human generations more of warfare ere

Spain acknowledged the new government, yet before the termination of that period the united states had become the first naval power and one of the most considerable commonwealths in the world; while the civil and religious liberty, the political independence of the land, together with the total expulsion of the ancient foreign tyranny from the soil, had been achieved ere the eyes of William were closed. The republic existed, in fact, from the moment of the abjuration in 1581.

The history of the rise of the Netherland Republic has been at the same time the biography of William the Silent. This, while it gives unity to the narrative, renders an elaborate description of his character superfluous. That life was a noble Christian epic; inspired with one great purpose from its commencement to its close; the stream flowing ever from one fountain with expanding fulness, but retaining all its original purity.

He was more than anything else a religious man. From his trust in God, he ever derived support and consolation in the darkest hours. Sincerely and deliberately himself a convert to the Reformed Church, he was ready to extend freedom of worship to Catholics on the one hand, and to Anabaptists on the other, for no man ever felt more keenly than he that the reformer who becomes in his turn a bigot is doubly odious.

His firmness was allied to his piety. His constancy in bearing the whole weight of as unequal a struggle as men have ever undertaken, was the theme of admiration even to his enemies. The rock in the ocean "tranquil amid raging billows," was the favourite emblem by which his friends expressed their sense of his firmness. A prince of high rank and with royal revenues, he stripped himself of station, wealth, almost at times of the common necessities of life, and became, in his country's cause, nearly a beggar as well as an outlaw. Ten years after his death, the account between his executors and his brother John amounted to 1,400,000 florins due to the count, secured by various pledges of real and personal property, and it was finally settled upon this basis. He was besides largely indebted to every one of his powerful relatives, so that the payment of the encumbrances upon his estate very nearly justified the fears of his children. While on the one hand, therefore, he poured out these enormous sums like water, and firmly refused a hearing to the tempting offers of the royal government, upon the other hand he proved the disinterested nature of his services by declining, year after year, the sovereignty over the provinces; and by only accepting, in the last days of his life, when refusal had become almost impossible, the limited constitutional supremacy over that portion of them which now makes the realm of his descendants. He lived and died, not for himself, but for his country: "God pity this poor people!" were his dying words.

His intellectual faculties were various and of the highest order. He had the exact, practical, and combining qualities which make the great commander, and his friends claimed that, in military genius, he was second to no captain in Europe.¹ This was, no doubt, an exaggeration of partial attachment, but it is certain that the emperor Charles had an exalted opinion of his capacity for the field. His fortification of Philippeville and Charlemont, in the face of the enemy — his passage of the Maas in Alva's sight — his unfortunate but well-ordered campaign against that general — his sublime plan of relief, projected and successfully directed at last from his sick bed, for the besieged city of Leyden — will always remain monuments of his practical military skill.

¹ "*Belli artibus neminem suo tempore parem habuit,*" says Everard van Reydt.

Of the soldier's great virtues — constancy in disaster, devotion to duty, hopefulness in defeat — no man ever possessed a larger share. He arrived, through a series of reverses, at a perfect victory. He planted a free commonwealth under the very battery of the Inquisition in defiance of the most powerful empire existing. He was, therefore, a conqueror in the loftiest sense, for he conquered liberty and a national existence for a whole people. The contest was long, and he fell in the struggle, but the victory was to the dead hero, not to the living monarch. It is to be remembered, too, that he always wrought with inferior instruments. His troops were usually mercenaries, who were but too apt to mutiny upon the eve of battle, while he was opposed by the most formidable veterans of Europe, commanded successively by the first captains of the age. That, with no lieutenant of eminent valour or experience, save only his brother Louis, and with none at all after that chieftain's death, William of Orange should succeed in baffling the efforts of Alva, Requesens, Don John of Austria, and Alessandro Farnese — men whose names are among the most brilliant in the military annals of the world — is in itself sufficient evidence of his warlike ability. At the period of his death he had reduced the number of obedient provinces to two; only Artois and Hainault acknowledging Philip, while the other fifteen were in open revolt, the greater part having solemnly forsworn their sovereign.

The supremacy of his political genius was entirely beyond question. He was the first statesman of the age. The quickness of his perception was only equalled by the caution which enabled him to mature the results of his observations. His knowledge of human nature was profound. He governed the passions and sentiments of a great nation as if they had been but the keys and chords of one vast instrument; and his hand rarely failed to evoke harmony even out of the wildest storms. The turbulent city of Ghent, which could obey no other master, which even the haughty emperor could only crush without controlling, was ever responsive to the master-hand of Orange. His presence scared away Hembyze and his bat-like crew, confounded the schemes of John Kasimir, frustrated the wiles of prince Chimay, and while he lived, Ghent was what it ought always to have remained, the bulwark, as it had been the cradle, of popular liberty. After his death it became its tomb.

His power of dealing with his fellow-men he manifested in the various ways in which it has been usually exhibited by statesmen. He possessed a ready eloquence — sometimes impassioned, oftener argumentative, always rational. His influence over his audience was unexampled in the annals of that country or age; yet he never condescended to flatter the people. He never followed the nation, but always led her in the path of duty and of honour, and was much more prone to rebuke the vices than to pander to the passions of his hearers. He never failed to administer ample chastisement to parsimony, to jealousy, to insubordination, to intolerance, to infidelity, wherever it was due, nor feared to confront the states or the people in their most angry hours, and to tell them the truth to their faces. While, therefore, he was ever ready to rebuke, and always too honest to flatter, he at the same time possessed the eloquence which could convince or persuade. He knew how to reach both the mind and the heart of his hearers. His orations, whether extemporaneous or prepared — his written messages to the states-general, to the provincial authorities, to the municipal bodies — his private correspondence with men of all ranks, from emperors and kings down to secretaries, and even children — all show an easy flow of language, a fulness of thought, a power of expression rare in that age, a fund of historical allusion,

a considerable power of imagination, a warmth of sentiment, a breadth of view, a directness of purpose — a range of qualities, in short, which would in themselves have stamped him as one of the master-minds of his century, had there been no other monument to his memory than the remains of his spoken or written eloquence. The bulk of his performances in this department was prodigious. Not even Philip was more industrious in the cabinet. Not even Granvella held a more facile pen. He wrote and spoke equally well in French, German, or Flemish; and he possessed, besides, Spanish, Italian, Latin. The weight of his correspondence alone would have almost sufficed for the common industry of a lifetime, and although many volumes of his speeches and letters have been published, there remain in the various archives of the Netherlands and Germany many documents from his hand which will probably never see the light. The efforts made to destroy the Netherlands by the most laborious and painstaking of tyrants were counteracted by the industry of the most indefatigable of patriots.

It is difficult to find many characteristics deserving of grave censure, but his enemies have adopted a simpler process. They have been able to detect few flaws in his nature, and therefore have denounced it in gross. It is not that his character was here and there defective, but that the eternal jewel was false. The patriotism was counterfeit; the self-abnegation and the generosity were counterfeit. He was governed only by ambition — by a desire of personal advancement. They never attempted to deny his talents, his industry, his vast sacrifices of wealth and station; but they ridiculed the idea that he could have been inspired by any but unworthy motives.¹ But as far as can be judged by a careful observation of undisputed facts, and by a

¹ "A man born to the greatest fame," says Bentivoglio, "if, content with his fortunes, he had not sought amid precipices for a still greater one." While paying homage to the extraordinary genius of the prince, to his energy, eloquence, perspicacity in all kinds of affairs, his absolute dominion over the minds and hearts of men, and his consummate skill in improving his own position and taking advantage of the false moves of his adversary, the cardinal proceeds to accuse him of "ambition, fraud, audacity, and rapacity." The last qualification seems sufficiently absurd to those who have even superficially studied the life of William the Silent. Of course, the successive changes of religion by the prince are ascribed to motives of interest — "*Videsi variare di Religione secondo che vario d'interessi. Da fanciullo in Germania fù Lutero. Passato in Fiandra mostrossi Cattolico. Al principio della rivolte si dichiara fautore delle nuove sette ma non professore manifesto d'alcuna; sinche finalmente gli parve di seguir quella de' Calvinisti, come la più contraria di tutte alla Religione Cattolica sostenuta dal Rè di Spagna.*" The cardinal does not add that the conversion of the prince to the reformed religion was at the blackest hour of the Reformation. Cabrera* is cooler and coarser. According to him the prince was a mere impostor. The emperor even had been often cautioned as to his favourite's arrogance, deceit, and ingratitude, and warned that the prince was "a fox who would eat up all his majesty's chickens." While acknowledging that he "could talk well of public affairs," and that he "entertained the ambassadors and nobility with splendour and magnificence," the historian proclaims him, however, "faithless and mendacious, a flatterer and a cheat."† Tassis‡ accused the prince of poisoning Count Bossu with oysters, and that Strada§ had a long story of his attending the death-bed of that nobleman in order to sneer at the viaticum. We have also seen the simple and heartfelt regret which the prince expressed in his private letters for Bossu's death and the solid service which he rendered to him in life. Of false accusations of this nature there was no end. One of the most atrocious has been recently resuscitated. A certain Christophe de Holstein accused the prince in 1578 of having instigated him to murder Duke Eric of Brunswick. The assassin undertook the job, but seems to have been deterred by a mysterious bleeding at his nose from proceeding with the business. As this respectable witness, by his own confession, had murdered his own brother, for money, and two merchants besides, had moreover been concerned in the killing or plundering of a "curate, a monk, and two hermits," and had been all his life a professional highwayman and assassin, it seems hardly worth while to discuss his statements. Probably a thousand such calumnies were circulated at different times against the prince. Yet the testimony of this wretched malefactor is gravely reproduced, at the expiration of near three centuries, as if it were admissible in any healthy court of historical justice. Truly says the adage: "*Calomniez toujours, il en restera quelque chose.*"

diligent collation of public and private documents, it would seem that no man — not even Washington — has ever been inspired by a purer patriotism. At any rate, the charge of ambition and self-seeking can only be answered by a reference to the whole picture. The words, the deeds of the man are there. As much as possible, his inmost soul is revealed in his confidential letters, and he who looks in a right spirit will hardly fail to find what he desires.

Whether originally of a timid temperament or not, he was certainly possessed of perfect courage at last. In siege and battle — in the deadly air of pestilential cities — in the long exhaustion of mind and body which comes from uniduly protracted labour and anxiety — amid the countless conspiracies of assassins — he was daily exposed to death in every shape. Within two years, five different attempts against his life had been discovered. Rank and fortune were offered to any malefactor who would compass the murder. He had already been shot through the head, and almost mortally wounded. Under such circumstances even a brave man might have seen a pitfall at every step, a dagger in every hand, and poison in every cup. On the contrary he was ever cheerful, and hardly took more precaution than usual. "God in his mercy," said he, with unaffected simplicity, "will maintain my innocence and my honour during my life and in future ages. As to my fortune and my life, I have dedicated both, long since, to his service. He will do therewith what pleases him for his glory and my salvation." Thus his suspicions were not even excited by the ominous face of Gérard, when he first presented himself at the dining-room door. The prince laughed off his wife's prophetic apprehension at the sight of his murderer, and was as cheerful as usual to the last.

He possessed, too, that which to the heathen philosopher seemed the greatest good — the sound mind in the sound body. His physical frame was after death found so perfect that a long life might have been in store for him, notwithstanding all which he had endured. The desperate illness of 1574, the frightful gunshot wound inflicted by Jaureguy in 1582, had left no traces. The physicians pronounced that his body presented an aspect of perfect health. His temperament was cheerful. At table, the pleasures of which, in moderation, were his only relaxation, he was always animated and merry, and this jocoseness was partly natural, partly intentional. In the darkest hours of his country's trial, he affected a serenity which he was far from feeling, so that his apparent gaiety at momentous epochs was even censured by dullards, who could not comprehend its philosophy, nor applaud the flippancy of William the Silent.¹

He went through life bearing the load of a people's sorrows upon his shoulders with a smiling face. Their name was the last word upon his lips, save the simple affirmative with which the soldier who had been battling for the right all his lifetime commended his soul in dying "to his great captain, Christ." The people were grateful and affectionate, for they trusted the character of their "Father William," and not all the clouds which calumny could collect ever dimmed to their eyes the radiance of that lofty mind to which they were accustomed, in their darkest calamities, to look for light. As long as he lived, he was the guiding-star of a brave nation, and when he died the little children cried in the streets.²