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#21 in our series by John Lothrop Motley

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MOTLEY'S HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS, PG EDITION, VOLUME 21.

THE RISE OF THE DUTCH REPUBLIC

By John Lothrop Motley

1855

1573 [CHAPTER IX.]

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For the sake of continuity in the narrative, the siege of Harlem has been related until its conclusion. This great event constituted, moreover,

the principal stuff in Netherland, history, up to the middle of the year 1573. A few loose threads must be now taken up before we can proceed farther.

Alva had for some time felt himself in a false and uncomfortable position. While he continued to be the object of a popular hatred as intense as ever glowed, he had gradually lost his hold upon those who, at the outset of his career, had been loudest and lowest in their demonstrations of respect. "Believe me," wrote Secretary Albornoz to Secretary Cayas, "this people abhor our nation worse than they abhor the Devil. As for the Duke of Alva, they foam at the mouth when they hear his name." Viglius, although still maintaining smooth relations with the Governor, had been, in reality, long since estranged from him. Even Aerschot, far whom the Duke had long maintained an intimacy half affectionate, half contemptuous, now began to treat him with a contumely which it was difficult for so proud a stomach to digest.

But the main source of discomfort was doubtless the presence of Medina Coeli. This was the perpetual thorn in his side, which no cunning could extract. A successor who would not and could not succeed him, yet who attended him as his shadow and his evil genius--a confidential colleague who betrayed his confidence, mocked his projects, derided his authority, and yet complained of ill treatment--a rival who was neither compeer nor subaltern, and who affected to be his censor--a functionary of a purely anomalous character, sheltering himself under his abnegation of an authority which he had not dared to assume, and criticising measures which he was not competent to grasp;--such was the Duke of Medina Coeli in Alva's estimation.

The bickering between the two Dukes became unceasing and disgraceful. Of course, each complained to the King, and each, according to his own account, was a martyr to the other's tyranny, but the meekness manifested by Alva; in all his relations with the new comer, was wonderful, if we are to believe the accounts furnished by himself and by his confidential secretary. On the other hand, Medina Coeli wrote to the King, complaining of Alva in most unmitigated strains, and asserting that he was himself never allowed to see any despatches, nor to have the slightest information as to the policy of the government. He reproached, the Duke with shrinking from personal participation in military operations, and begged the royal forgiveness if he withdrew from a scene where he felt himself to be superfluous.

Accordingly, towards the end of November, he took his departure, without paying his respects. The Governor complained to the King of this unceremonious proceeding, and assured His Majesty that never were courtesy and gentleness so ill requited as his had been by this ingrate and cankered Duke. "He told me," said Alva, "that if I did not stay in the field, he would not remain with me in peaceful cities, and he asked me if I intended to march into Holland with the troops which were to winter there. I answered, that I should go wherever it was necessary, even should I be obliged to swim through all the canals of Holland." After giving these details, the Duke added, with great appearance of candor and meekness, that he was certain Medina Coeli had only been

influenced by extreme zeal for His Majesty's service, and that, finding, so little for him to do in the Netherlands, he had become dissatisfied with his position.

Immediately after the fall of Harlem, another attempt was made by Alva to win back the allegiance of the other cities by proclamations. It had become obvious to the Governor that so determined a resistance on the part of the first place besieged augured many long campaigns before the whole province could be subdued. A circular was accordingly issued upon the 26th July from Utrecht, and published immediately afterwards in all the cities of the Netherlands. It was a paper of singular character, commingling an affectation of almost ludicrous clemency, with honest and hearty brutality. There was consequently something very grotesque about the document. Philip, in the outset, was made to sustain towards his undutiful subjects the characters of the brooding hen and the prodigal's father; a range of impersonation hardly to be allowed him, even by the most abject flattery. "Ye are well aware," thus ran the address, "that the King has, over and over again, manifested his willingness to receive his children, in however forlorn a condition the prodigals might return. His Majesty assures you once more that your sins, however black they may have been, shall be forgiven and forgotten in the plenitude of royal kindness, if you repent and return in season to his Majesty's embrace. Notwithstanding your manifold crimes, his Majesty still seeks, like a hen calling her chickens, to gather you all under the parental wing. The King hereby warns you once more, therefore, to place yourselves in his royal hands, and not to wait for his rage, cruelty, and fury, and the approach of his army."

The affectionate character of the address, already fading towards the end of the preamble, soon changes to bitterness. The domestic maternal fowl dilates into the sanguinary dragon as the address proceeds. "But if," continues the monarch, "ye disregard these offers of mercy, receiving them with closed ears, as heretofore, then we warn you that there is no rigor, nor cruelty, however great, which you are not to expect by laying waste, starvation, and the sword, in such manner that nowhere shall remain a relic of that which at present exists, but his Majesty will strip bare and utterly depopulate the land, and cause it to be inhabited again by strangers; since otherwise his Majesty could not believe that the will of God and of his Majesty had been accomplished."

It is almost superfluous to add that this circular remained fruitless. The royal wrath, thus blasphemously identifying itself with divine vengeance, inspired no terror, the royal blandishments no affection.

The next point of attack was the city of Alkmaar, situate quite at the termination of the Peninsula, among the lagunes and redeemed prairies of North Holland. The Prince of Orange had already provided it with a small garrison. The city had been summoned to surrender by the middle of July, and had returned a bold refusal.--Meantime, the Spaniards had retired from before the walls, while the surrender and chastisement of Harlem occupied them during the next succeeding weeks. The month of August, moreover, was mainly consumed by Alva in quelling a dangerous and protracted mutiny, which broke out among the Spanish soldiers at Harlem--

between three and four thousand of them having been quartered upon the ill-fated population of that city.

Unceasing misery was endured by the inhabitants at the hands of the ferocious Spaniards, flushed with victory, mutinous for long arrears of pay, and greedy for the booty which had been denied. At times, however, the fury of the soldiery was more violently directed against their own commanders than against the enemy. A project was even formed by the malcontent troops to deliver Harlem into the hands of Orange. A party of them, disguised as Baltic merchants, waited upon the Prince at Delft, and were secretly admitted to his bedside before he had risen. They declared to him that they were Spanish soldiers, who had compassion on his cause, were dissatisfied with their own government, and were ready, upon receipt of forty thousand guilders, to deliver the city into his hands. The Prince took the matter into consideration, and promised to accept the offer if he could raise the required sum. This, however, he found himself unable to do within the stipulated time, and thus, for want of so paltry a sum, the offer was of necessity declined.

Various were the excesses committed by the insubordinate troops in every province in the Netherlands upon the long-suffering inhabitants. "Nothing," wrote Alva, "had given him so much pain during his forty years of service." He avowed his determination to go to Amsterdam in order to offer himself as a hostage to the soldiery, if by so doing he could quell the mutiny. He went to Amsterdam accordingly, where by his exertions, ably seconded by those of the Marquis Vitelli, and by the payment of thirty crowns to each soldier--fourteen on account of arrearages and sixteen as his share in the Harlem compensation money--the rebellion was appeased, and obedience restored.

There was now leisure for the General to devote his whole energies against the little city of Alkmaar. On that bank and shoal, the extreme verge of habitable earth, the spirit of Holland's Freedom stood at bay. The grey towers of Egmont Castle and of Egmont Abbey rose between the city and the sea, and there the troops sent by the Prince of Orange were quartered during the very brief period in which the citizens wavered as to receiving them. The die was soon cast, however, and the Prince's garrison admitted. The Spaniards advanced, burned the village of Egmont to the ground as soon as the patriots had left it, and on the 21st of August Don Frederic, appearing before the walls, proceeded formally to invest Allanaar. In a few days this had been so thoroughly accomplished that, in Alva's language, "it was impossible for a sparrow to enter or go out of the city." The odds were somewhat unequal. Sixteen thousand veteran troops constituted the besieging force. Within the city were a garrison of eight hundred soldiers, together with thirteen hundred burghers, capable of bearing arms. The rest of the population consisted of a very few refugees, besides the women and children. Two thousand one hundred able-bodied men, of whom only about one-third were soldiers, to resist sixteen thousand regulars.

Nor was there any doubt as to the fate which was reserved for them, should they succumb. The Duke was vociferous at the ingratitude with which his clemency had hitherto been requited. He complained bitterly of

the ill success which had attended his monitory circulars; reproached himself with incredible vehemence, for his previous mildness, and protested that, after having executed only twenty-three hundred persons at the surrender of Harlem, besides a few additional burghers since, he had met with no correspondent demonstrations of affection. He promised himself, however, an ample compensation for all this ingratitude, in the wholesale vengeance which he purposed to wreak upon Alkmaar. Already he gloated in anticipation over the havoc which would soon be let loose within those walls. Such ravings, if invented by the pen of fiction, would seem a puerile caricature; proceeding, authentically, from his own, --they still appear almost too exaggerated for belief. "If I take Alkmaar," he wrote to Philip, "I am resolved not to leave a single creature alive; the knife shall be put to every throat. Since the example of Harlem has proved of no use, perhaps an example of cruelty will bring the other cities to their senses."

He took occasion also to read a lecture to the party of conciliation in Madrid, whose counsels, as he believed, his sovereign was beginning to heed. Nothing, he maintained, could be more senseless than the idea of pardon and clemency. This had been sufficiently proved by recent events. It was easy for people at a distance to talk about gentleness, but those upon the spot knew better. Gentleness had produced nothing, so far; violence alone could succeed in future. "Let your Majesty," he said, "be disabused of the impression, that with kindness anything can be done with these people. Already have matters reached such a point that many of those born in the country, who have hitherto advocated clemency, are now undeceived, and acknowledge--their mistake. They are of opinion that not a living soul should be left in Alkmaar, but that every individual should be put to the sword." At the same time he took occasion, even in these ferocious letters, which seem dripping with blood, to commend his own natural benignity of disposition. "Your Majesty may be certain," he said, "that no man on earth desires the path of clemency more than I do, notwithstanding my particular hatred for heretics and traitors." It was therefore with regret that he saw himself obliged to take the opposite course, and to stifle all his gentler sentiments.

Upon Diedrich Sonoy, Lieutenant-Governor for Orange in the province of North Holland, devolved the immediate responsibility of defending this part of the country. As the storm rolled slowly up from the south, even that experienced officer became uneasy at the unequal conflict impending. He despatched a letter to his chief, giving a gloomy picture of his position. All looked instinctively towards the Prince, as to a God in their time of danger; all felt as if upon his genius and fortitude depended the whole welfare of the fatherland. It was hoped, too, that some resource had been provided in a secret foreign alliance. "If your princely grace," wrote Sonoy, "have made a contract for assistance with any powerful potentate, it is of the highest importance that it should be known to all the cities, in order to put an end to the emigration, and to console the people in their affliction."

The answer, of the Prince was full of lofty enthusiasm. He reprimanded with gentle but earnest eloquence the despondency and little faith of his lieutenant and other adherents. He had not expected, he said, that they

would have so soon forgotten their manly courage. They seemed to consider the whole fate of the country attached to the city of Harlem. He took God to witness that--he had spared no pains, and would willingly have spared no drop of his blood to save that devoted city. "But as, notwithstanding our efforts," he continued, "it has pleased God Almighty to dispose of Harlem according to His divine will, shall we, therefore, deny and deride His holy word? Has the strong arm of the Lord thereby grown weaker? Has his Church therefore come to caught? You ask if I have entered into a firm treaty with any great king or potentate, to which I answer, that before I ever took up the cause of the oppressed Christians in these provinces, I had entered into a close alliance with the King of kings; and I am firmly convinced that all who put their trust in Him shall be saved by His almighty hand. The God of armies will raise up armies for us to do battle with our enemies sad His own." In conclusion, he stated his preparations for attacking the enemy by sea as well as by land, and encouraged his lieutenant and the citizens of the northern quarter to maintain a bold front before the advancing foe.

And now, with the dismantled and desolate Harlem before their eyes, a prophetic phantom, perhaps, of their own imminent fate, did the handful of people shut up within Alkmaar prepare for the worst. Their main hope lay in the friendly sea. The vast sluices called the Zyp, through which an inundation of the whole northern province could be very soon effected, were but a few miles distant. By opening these gates, and by piercing a few dykes, the ocean might be made to fight for them. To obtain this result, however, the consent of the inhabitants was requisite, as the destruction of all the standing crops would be inevitable. The city was so closely invested, that it was a matter of life and death to venture forth, and it was difficult, therefore, to find an envoy for this hazardous mission. At last, a carpenter in the city, Peter Van der Mey by name, undertook the adventure, and was entrusted with letters to Sonoy, to the Prince of Orange, and to the leading personages, in several cities of the province: These papers were enclosed in a hollow walking-staff, carefully made fast at the top.

Affairs soon approached a crisis within the beleaguered city. Daily skirmishes, without decisive result; had taken place outside the walls. At last, on the 18th of September, after a steady cannonade of nearly twelve hours, Don Frederic, at three in the afternoon, ordered an assault. Notwithstanding his seven months' experience at Harlem, he still believed it certain that he should carry Alkmaar by storm. The attack took place at once upon the Frisian gate and upon the red tower on the opposite side. Two choice regiments, recently arrived from Lombardy; led the onset, rending the air with their shouts, and confident of an easy victory. They were sustained by what seemed an overwhelming force of disciplined troops. Yet never, even in the recent history of Harlem, had an attack been received by more dauntless breasts. Every living man was on the walls. The storming parties were assailed with cannon, with musketry, with pistols. Boiling water, pitch and oil, molten lead, and unslaked lime, were poured upon them every moment. Hundreds of tarred and burning hoops were skilfully quoited around the necks of the soldiers, who struggled in vain to extricate themselves from these fiery ruffs, while as fast as any of the invaders planted foot upon the breach,

they were confronted face to face with sword and dagger by the burghers, who hurled them headlong into the moat below.

Thrice was the attack renewed with ever-increasing rage--thrice repulsed with unflinching fortitude. The storm continued four hours long. During all that period, not one of the defenders left his post, till he dropped from it dead or wounded. The women and children, unscared by the balls flying in every direction, or by the hand-to-hand conflicts on the ramparts; passed steadily to and fro from the arsenals to the fortifications, constantly supplying their fathers, husbands, and brothers with powder and ball. Thus, every human being in the city that could walk had become a soldier. At last darkness fell upon the scene. The trumpet of recall was sounded, and the Spaniards, utterly discomfited, retired from the walls, leaving at least one thousand dead in the trenches, while only thirteen burghers and twenty-four of the garrison lost their lives. Thus was Alkmaar preserved for a little longer--thus a large and well-appointed army signally defeated by a handful of men fighting for their firesides and altars. Ensign Solis, who had mounted the breach for an instant, and miraculously escaped with life, after having been hurled from the battlements, reported that he had seen "neither helmet nor harness," as he looked down into the city: only some plain-looking people, generally dressed like fishermen. Yet these plain-looking fishermen had defeated the veterans of Alva.

The citizens felt encouraged by the results of that day's work. Moreover, they already possessed such information concerning the condition of affairs in the camp of the enemy as gave them additional confidence. A Spaniard, named Jeronimo, had been taken prisoner and brought into the city. On receiving a promise of pardon, he had revealed many secrets concerning the position and intentions of the besieging army. It is painful to add that the prisoner, notwithstanding his disclosures and the promise under which they had been made, was treacherously executed. He begged hard for his life as he was led to the gallows, offering fresh revelations, which, however, after the ample communications already made, were esteemed superfluous. Finding this of no avail, he promised his captors, with perfect simplicity, to go down on his knees and worship the Devil precisely as they did, if by so doing he might obtain mercy. It may be supposed that such a proposition was not likely to gain additional favor for him in the eyes of these rigid Calvinists, and the poor wretch was accordingly hanged.

The day following the assault, a fresh cannonade was opened upon the city. Seven hundred shots having been discharged, the attack was ordered. It was in vain: neither threats nor entreaties could induce the Spaniards, hitherto so indomitable, to mount the breach. The place seemed to their imagination protected by more than mortal powers; otherwise how was it possible that a few half-starved fishermen could already have so triumphantly overthrown the time-honored legions of Spain. It was thought, no doubt, that the Devil, whom they worshipped, would continue to protect his children. Neither the entreaties nor the menaces of Don Frederic were of any avail. Several soldiers allowed themselves to be run through the body by their own officers, rather than advance to the walls; and the assault was accordingly postponed to an



indefinite period.

Meantime, as Governor Sonoy had opened many of the dykes, the land in the neighbourhood of the camp was becoming plashy, although as yet the threatened inundation had not taken place. The soldiers were already very uncomfortable and very refractory. The carpenter-envoy had not been idle, having, upon the 26th September, arrived at Sonoy's quarters, bearing letters from the Prince of Orange. These despatches gave distinct directions to Sonoy to flood the countly at all risks; rather than allow Alkmaar to, fall into the enemy's hands. The dykes and sluices were to be protected by a strong guard, lest the peasants, in order to save their crops, should repair or close them in the night-time. The letters of Orange were copied, and, together with fresh communications from Sonoy, delivered to the carpenter. A note on the margin of the Prince's letter, directed the citizens to kindle four beacon fires in specified places, as soon as it should prove necessary to resort to extreme measures. When that moment should arrive, it was solemnly promised that an inundation should be created which should sweep the whole Spanish army into the sea. The work had, in fact, been commenced. The Zyp and other sluices had already been opened, and a vast body of water, driven by a strong north-west wind, had rushed in from the ocean. It needed only that two great dykes should be pierced to render the deluge and the desolation complete. The harvests were doomed to destruction, and a frightful loss of property rendered inevitable, but, at any rate, the Spaniards, if this last measure were taken, must fly or perish to a man.

This decisive blow having been thus ordered and promised; the carpenter set forth towards the city. He was, however, not so successful in accomplishing his entrance unmolested, as he had been in effecting his departure. He narrowly escaped with his life in passing through the enemy's lines, and while occupied in saving himself was so unlucky, or, as it proved, so fortunate, as to lose the stick in which his despatches were enclosed. He made good his entrance into the city, where, byword of mouth, he encouraged his fellow-burghers as to the intentions of the Prince and Sonoy. In the meantime his letters were laid before the general of the besieging army. The resolution taken by Orange, of which Don Frederic was thus unintentionally made aware, to flood the country far and near, rather than fail to protect Alkmaar, made a profound impression upon his mind. It was obvious that he was dealing with a determined leader and with desperate men. His attempt to carry the place by storm had signally failed, and he could not deceive himself as to the temper and disposition of his troops ever since that repulse. When it should become known that they were threatened with submersion in the ocean, in addition to all the other horrors of war, he had reason to believe that they would retire ignominiously from that remote and desolate sand hook, where, by remaining, they could only find a watery grave. These views having been discussed in a council of officers, the result was reached that sufficient had been already accomplished for the glory of Spanish arms. Neither honor nor loyalty, it was thought, required that sixteen thousand soldiers should be sacrificed in a contest, not with man but with the ocean.

On the 8th of October, accordingly, the siege, which had lasted seven weeks, was raised, and Don Frederic rejoined his father in Amsterdam. Ready to die in the last ditch, and to overwhelm both themselves and their foes in a common catastrophe the Hollanders had at last compelled their haughty enemy to fly from a position which he had so insolently assumed.

These public transactions and military operations were not the only important events which affected the fate of Holland and its sister provinces at this juncture. The secret relations which had already been renewed between Louis of Nassau, as plenipotentiary of his brother and the French court, had for some time excited great uneasiness in the mind of Alva. Count Louis was known to be as skilful a negotiator as he was valiant and accomplished as a soldier. His frankness and boldness created confidence. The "brave spirit in the loyal breast" inspired all his dealing; his experience and quick perception of character prevented his becoming a dupe of even the most adroit politicians, while his truth of purpose made him incapable either of overreaching an ally or of betraying a trust. His career indicated that diplomacy might be sometimes successful, even although founded upon sincerity.

Alva secretly expressed to his sovereign much suspicion of France. He reminded him that Charles IX.; during the early part of the preceding year, had given the assurance that he was secretly dealing with Louis of Nassau, only that he might induce the Count to pass over to Philip's service. At the same time Charles had been doing all he could to succor Moos, and had written the memorable letter which had fallen into Alva's hands on the capture of Genlis, and which expressed such a fixed determination to inflict a deadly blow upon the King, whom the writer was thus endeavouring to cajole. All this the Governor recalled to the recollection of his sovereign. In view of this increasing repugnance of the English court, Alva recommended that fair words should be employed; hinting, however, that it would be by no means necessary for his master to consider himself very strictly bound by any such pledges to Elizabeth, if they should happen to become inconveniently pressing. "A monarch's promises," he delicately suggested, "were not to be considered so sacred as those of humbler mortals. Not that the King should directly violate his word, but at the same time," continued the Duke, "I have thought all my life, and I have learned it from the Emperor, your Majesty's father, that the negotiations of kings depend upon different principles from those of us private gentlemen who walk the world; and in this manner I always observed that your Majesty's father, who was, so great a gentleman and so powerful a prince, conducted his affairs." The Governor took occasion, likewise, to express his regrets at the awkward manner in which the Ridolfi scheme had been managed. Had he been consulted at an earlier day, the affair could have been treated much more delicately; as it was, there could be little doubt but that the discovery of the plot had prejudiced the mind of Elizabeth against Spain. "From that dust," concluded the Duke, "has resulted all this dirt." It could hardly be matter of surprise, either to Philip or his Viceroy, that the discovery by Elizabeth of a plot upon their parts to take her life and place the crown upon the head of her hated rival, should have engendered unamiable feelings in her bosom towards them. For the moment, however, Alva's

negotiations were apparently successful.

On the first of May, 1573, the articles of convention between England and Spain, with regard to the Netherland difficulty, had been formally published in Brussels. The Duke, in communicating the termination of these arrangements, quietly recommended his master thenceforth to take the English ministry into his pay. In particular he advised his Majesty to bestow an annual bribe upon Lord Burleigh, "who held the kingdom in his hand; for it has always been my opinion," he continued, "that it was an excellent practice for princes to give pensions to the ministers of other potentates, and to keep those at home who took bribes from nobody."

On the other hand, the negotiations of Orange with the English court were not yet successful, and he still found it almost impossible to raise the requisite funds for carrying on the war. Certainly, his private letters showed that neither he nor his brothers were self-seekers in their negotiations. "You know," said he in a letter to his brothers, "that my intention has never been to seek my private advantage. I have only aspired for the liberty of the country, in conscience and in polity, which foreigners have sought to oppress. I have no other articles to propose, save that religion, reformed according to the Word of God, should be permitted, that then the commonwealth should be restored to its ancient liberty, and, to that end, that the Spaniards and other soldiery should be compelled to retire."

The restoration of civil and religious liberty, the establishment of the great principle of toleration in matters of conscience, constituted the purpose to which his days and nights were devoted, his princely fortune sacrificed, his life-blood risked. At the same time, his enforcement of toleration to both religions excited calumny against him among the bigoted adherents of both. By the Catholics he was accused of having instigated the excesses which he had done everything in his power to repress. The enormities of De la Marck, which had inspired the Prince's indignation, were even laid at the door of him who had risked his life to prevent and to chastise them. De la Marck had, indeed, more than counterbalanced his great service in the taking of Brill, by his subsequent cruelties. At last, Father Cornelius Musius, pastor of Saint Agatha, at the age of seventy-two, a man highly esteemed by the Prince of Orange, had been put to torture and death by this barbarian, under circumstances of great atrocity. The horrid deed cost the Prince many tears, aroused the indignation of the estates of Holland, and produced the dismissal of the perpetrator from their service. It was considered expedient, however, in view of his past services, his powerful connexions, and his troublesome character, that he should be induced peaceably to leave the country.

It was long before the Prince and the estates could succeed in ridding themselves of this encumbrance. He created several riots in different parts of the province, and boasted, that he had many fine ships of war and three thousand men devoted to him, by whose assistance he could make the estates "dance after his pipe." At the beginning of the following year (1574), he was at last compelled to leave the provinces, which he never again troubled with his presence. Some years afterwards, he died

of the bite of a mad dog; an end not inappropriate to a man of so rabid a disposition.

While the Prince was thus steadily striving for a lofty and generous purpose, he was, of course, represented by his implacable enemies as a man playing a game which, unfortunately for himself, was a losing one. "That poor prince," said Granvelle, "has been ill advised. I doubt now whether he will ever be able to make his peace, and I think we shall rather try to get rid of him and his brother as if they were Turks. The marriage with the daughter of Maurice, 'unde mala et quia ipse talis', and his brothers have done him much harm. So have Schwendi and German intimacies. I saw it all very plainly, but he did not choose to believe me."

Ill-starred, worse counselled William of Orange! Had he but taken the friendly Cardinal's advice, kept his hand from German marriages and his feet from conventicles--had he assisted his sovereign in burning heretics and hunting rebels, it would not then have become necessary "to treat him like a Turk." This is unquestionable. It is equally so that there would have been one great lamp the less in that strait and difficult pathway which leads to the temple of true glory.

The main reliance of Orange was upon the secret negotiations which his brother Louis was then renewing with the French government. The Prince had felt an almost insurmountable repugnance towards entertaining any relation with that blood-stained court, since the massacre of Saint Bartholomew. But a new face had recently been put upon that transaction. Instead of glorying, in their crime, the King and his mother now assumed a tone of compunction, and averred that the deed had been unpremeditated; that it had been the result of a panic or an ecstasy of fear inspired by the suddenly discovered designs of the Huguenots; and that, in the instinct of self-preservation, the King, with his family and immediate friends, had plunged into a crime which they now bitterly lamented. The French envoys at the different courts of Europe were directed to impress this view upon the minds of the monarchs to whom they were accredited. It was certainly a very different instruction from that which they had at first received. Their cue had originally been to claim a full meed of praise and thanksgiving in behalf of their sovereign for his meritorious exploit. The salvos of artillery, the illuminations and rejoicings, the solemn processions and masses by which the auspicious event had been celebrated, were yet fresh in the memory of men. The ambassadors were sufficiently embarrassed by the distinct and determined approbation which they had recently expressed. Although the King, by formal proclamation, had assumed the whole responsibility, as he had notoriously been one of the chief perpetrators of the deed, his agents were now to stultify themselves and their monarch by representing, as a deplorable act of frenzy, the massacre which they had already extolled to the echo as a skilfully executed and entirely commendable achievement.

To humble the power of Spain, to obtain the hand of Queen Elizabeth for the Duke d'Alencon, to establish an insidious kind of protectorate over the Protestant princes of Germany, to obtain the throne of Poland for the Duke of Anjou, and even to obtain the imperial crown for the house of

Valois--all these cherished projects seemed dashed to the ground by the Paris massacre and the abhorrence which it had created. Charles and Catharine were not slow to discover the false position in which they had placed themselves, while the Spanish jocularly at the immense error committed by France was visible enough through the assumed mask of holy horror.

Philip and Alva listened with mischievous joy to the howl of execration which swept through Christendom upon every wind. They rejoiced as heartily in the humiliation of the malefactors as they did in the perpetration of the crime. "Your Majesty," wrote Louis of Nassau, very bluntly, to King Charles, "sees how the Spaniard, your mortal enemy, feasts himself full with the desolation of your affairs; how he laughs, to-split his sides, at your misfortunes. This massacre has enabled him to weaken your Majesty more than he could have done by a war of thirty years."

Before the year had revolved, Charles had become thoroughly convinced of the fatal impression produced by the event. Bitter and almost abject were his whinings at the Catholic King's desertion of his cause. "He knows well," wrote Charles to Saint Goard, "that if he can terminate these troubles and leave me alone in the dance, he will have leisure and means to establish his authority, not only in the Netherlands but elsewhere; and that he will render himself more grand and formidable than he has ever been. This is the return they render for the good received from me, which is such as every one knows."

Gaspar de Schomberg, the adroit and honorable agent of Charles in Germany, had at a very early day warned his royal master of the ill effect of the massacre upon all the schemes which he had been pursuing, and especially upon those which referred to the crowns of the Empire and of Poland. The first project was destined to be soon abandoned. It was reserved neither for Charles nor Philip to divert the succession in Germany from the numerous offspring of Maximilian; yet it is instructive to observe the unprincipled avidity with which the prize was sought by both. Each was willing to effect its purchase by abjuring what were supposed his most cherished principles. Philip of Spain, whose mission was to extirpate heresy throughout his realms, and who, in pursuance of that mission, had already perpetrated more crimes, and waded more deeply in the blood of his subjects, than monarch had often done before; Philip, for whom his apologists have never found any defence, save that he believed it his duty to God rather to depopulate his territories than to permit a single heretic within their limits--now entered into secret negotiations with the princes of the Empire. He pledged himself, if they would confer the crown upon him, that he would withdraw the Spaniards from the Netherlands; that he would tolerate in those provinces the exercise of the Reformed religion; that he would recognize their union with the rest of the German Empire, and their consequent claim to the benefits of the Passau treaty; that he would restore the Prince of Orange "and all his accomplices" to their former possessions, dignities, and condition; and that he would cause to be observed, throughout every realm incorporated with the Empire, all the edicts and ordinances which had been constructed to secure religious freedom in Germany. In brief,

Philip was willing, in case the crown of Charlemagne should be promised him, to undo the work of his life, to reinstate the arch-rebel whom he had hunted and proscribed, and to bow before that Reformation whose disciples he had so long burned, and butchered. So much extent and no more had that religious, conviction by which he had for years had the effrontery to excuse the enormities practised in the Netherlands. God would never forgive him so long as one heretic remained unburned in the provinces; yet give him the Imperial sceptre, and every heretic, without forswearing his heresy, should be purged with hyssop and become whiter than snow.

Charles IX., too, although it was not possible for him to recal to life the countless victims of the Parisian wedding, was yet ready to explain those murders to the satisfaction of every unprejudiced mind. This had become strictly necessary. Although the accession of either his Most Christian or Most Catholic Majesty to the throne of the Caesars was a most improbable event, yet the humbler elective, throne actually vacant was indirectly in the gift of the same powers. It was possible that the crown of Poland might be secured for the Duke of Anjou. That key unlocks the complicated policy of this and the succeeding year. The Polish election is the clue to the labyrinthian intrigues and royal tergiversations during the period of the interregnum. Sigismund Augustus, last of the Jagellons, had died on the 7th July; 1572. The prominent candidates to succeed him were the Archduke Ernest, son of the Emperor, and Henry of Anjou. The Prince of Orange was not forgotten. A strong party were in favor of compassing his election, as the most signal triumph which Protestantism could gain, but his ambition had not been excited by the prospect of such a prize. His own work required all the energies of all his life. His influence, however, was powerful, and eagerly sought by the partisans of Anjou. The Lutherans and Moravians in Poland were numerous, the Protestant party there and in Germany holding the whole balance of the election in their hands.

It was difficult for the Prince to overcome his repugnance to the very name of the man whose crime had at once made France desolate, and blighted the fair prospects under which he and his brother had, the year before, entered the Netherlands. Nevertheless; he was willing to listen to the statements by which the King and his ministers endeavoured, not entirely without success, to remove from their reputations, if not from their souls; the guilt of deep design. It was something, that the murderers now affected to expiate their offence in sackcloth and ashes-- it was something that, by favoring the pretensions of Anjou, and by listening with indulgence to the repentance of Charles, the siege of Rochelle could be terminated, the Huguenots restored to freedom of conscience, and an alliance with a powerful nation established, by aid of which the Netherlands might once more lift their heads. The French government, deeply hostile to Spain, both from passion and policy, was capable of rendering much assistance to the revolted provinces. "I entreat you most humbly, my good master," wrote Schomberg to Charles IX., "to beware of allowing the electors to take into their heads that you are favoring the affairs of the King of Spain in any manner whatsoever. Commit against him no act of open hostility, if you think that imprudent; but look sharp! if you do not wish to be thrown clean out

of your saddle. I should split with rage if I should see you, in consequence of the wicked calumnies of your enemies, fail to secure the prize."

Orange was induced, therefore, to accept, however distrustfully, the expression of a repentance which was to be accompanied with healing measures. He allowed his brother Louis to resume negotiations with Schomberg, in Germany. He drew up and transmitted to him the outlines of a treaty which he was willing to make with Charles. The main conditions of this arrangement illustrated the disinterested character of the man. He stipulated that the King of France should immediately make peace with his subjects, declaring expressly that he had been abused by those, who, under pretext of his service, had sought their own profit at the price of ruin to the crown and people. The King should make religion free. The edict to that effect should be confirmed by all the parliaments and estates of the kingdom, and such confirmations should be distributed without reserve or deceit among all the princes of Germany. If his Majesty were not inclined to make war for the liberation of the Netherlands, he was to furnish the Prince of Orange with one hundred thousand crowns at once, and every three months with another hundred thousand. The Prince was to have liberty to raise one thousand cavalry and seven thousand infantry in France. Every city or town in the provinces which should be conquered by his arms, except in Holland or Zealand, should be placed under the sceptre, and in the hands of the King of France. The provinces of Holland and Zealand should also be placed under his protection, but should be governed by their own gentlemen and citizens. Perfect religious liberty and maintenance of the ancient constitutions, privileges, and charters were to be guaranteed "without any cavilling whatsoever." The Prince of Orange, or the estates of Holland or Zealand, were to reimburse his Christian Majesty for the sums which he was to advance. In this last clause was the only mention which the Prince made of himself, excepting in the stipulation that he was to be allowed a levy of troops in France. His only personal claims were to enlist soldiers to fight the battles of freedom, and to pay their expense, if it should not be provided for by the estates. At nearly the same period, he furnished his secret envoys, Luinbres and Doctor Taijaert, who were to proceed to Paris, with similar instructions.

The indefatigable exertions of Schomberg, and the almost passionate explanations on the part of the court of France, at length produced their effect. "You will constantly assure the princes," wrote the Duke of Anjou to Schomberg, "that the things written, to you concerning that which had happened in this kingdom are true; that the events occurred suddenly, without having been in any manner premeditated; that neither the King nor myself have ever had any intelligence with, the King of Spain, against those of the religion, and that all is utter imposture which is daily said on this subject to the princes."

Count Louis required peremptorily, however, that the royal repentance should bring forth the fruit of salvation for the remaining victims. Out of the nettles of these dangerous intrigues his fearless hand plucked the "flower of safety" for his down-trodden cause. He demanded not words, but deeds, or at least pledges. He maintained with the agents of Charles

and with the monarch himself the same hardy scepticism which was manifested by the Huguenot deputies in their conferences with Catharine de Medicis. "Is the word of a king," said the dowager to the commissioners, who were insisting upon guarantees, "is the word of a king not sufficient?"--"No, madam," replied one of them, "by Saint Bartholomew, no!" Count Louis told Schomberg roundly, and repeated it many times, that he must have in a very few days a categorical response, "not to consist in words alone, but in deeds, and that he could not, and would not, risk for ever the honor of his brother, nor the property; blood, and life of those poor people who favored the cause."

On the 23rd March, 1573, Schomberg had an interview with Count Louis, which lasted seven or eight hours. In that interview the enterprises of the Count, "which," said Schomberg, "are assuredly grand and beautiful," were thoroughly discussed, and a series of conditions, drawn up partly in the hand of one, partly in that of the other negotiator; definitely agreed upon. These conditions were on the basis of a protectorate over Holland and Zealand for the King of France, with sovereignty over the other places to be acquired in the Netherlands. They were in strict accordance with the articles furnished by the Prince of Orange. Liberty of worship for those of both religions, sacred preservation of municipal charters, and stipulation of certain annual subsidies on the part of France, in case his Majesty should not take the field, were the principal features.

Ten days later, Schomberg wrote to his master that the Count was willing to use all the influence of his family to procure for Anjou the crown of Poland, while Louis, having thus completed his negotiations with the agent, addressed a long and earnest letter to the royal principal. This remarkable despatch was stamped throughout with the impress of the writer's frank and fearless character. "Thus diddest thou" has rarely been addressed to anointed monarch in such unequivocal tones: The letter painted the favorable position in which the king had been placed previously to the fatal summer of 1572. The Queen of England was then most amicably disposed towards him, and inclined to a yet closer connexion with his family. The German princes were desirous to elect him King of the Romans, a dignity for which his grandfather had so fruitlessly contended. The Netherlanders, driven to despair by the tyranny of their own sovereign, were eager to throw themselves into his arms. All this had been owing to his edict of religious pacification. How changed the picture now! Who now did reverence to a King so criminal and so fallen? "Your Majesty to-day," said Louis, earnestly and plainly, "is near to ruin. The State, crumbling on every side and almost abandoned, is a prey to any one who wishes to seize upon it; the more so, because your Majesty, having, by the late excess and by the wars previously made, endeavoured to force men's consciences, is now so destitute, not only of nobility and soldiery but of that which constitutes the strongest column of the throne, the love and good wishes of the lieges, that your Majesty resembles an ancient building propped up, day after, day, with piles, but which it will be impossible long to prevent from falling to the earth." Certainly, here were wholesome truths told in straightforward style.



The Count proceeded to remind the King of the joy which the "Spaniard, his mortal enemy," had conceived from the desolation of his affairs, being assured that he should, by the troubles in France, be enabled to accomplish his own purposes without striking a blow. This, he observed, had been the secret of the courtesy with which the writer himself had been treated by the Duke of Alva at the surrender of Mons. Louis assured the King, in continuation, that if he persevered in these oppressive courses towards his subjects of the new religion, there was no hope for him, and that his two brothers would, to no purpose, take their departure for England, and, for Poland, leaving him with a difficult and dangerous war upon his hands. So long as he maintained a hostile attitude towards the Protestants in his own kingdom, his fair words would produce no effect elsewhere. "We are beginning to be vexed," said the Count, "with the manner of negotiation practised by France. Men do not proceed roundly to business there, but angle with their dissimulation as with a hook."

He bluntly reminded the King of the deceit which he had practised towards the Admiral--a sufficient reason why no reliance could in future be placed upon his word. Signal vengeance on those concerned in the attempted assassination of that great man had been promised, in the royal letters to the Prince of Orange, just before St. Bartholomew. "Two days afterwards," said Louis, "your Majesty took that vengeance, but in rather ill fashion." It was certain that the King was surrounded by men who desired to work his ruin, and who, for their own purposes, would cause him to bathe still deeper than he had done before in the blood of his subjects. This ruin his Majesty could still avert; by making peace in his kingdom, and by ceasing to torment his poor subjects of the religion.

In conclusion, the Count, with a few simple but eloquent phrases, alluded to the impossibility of chaining men's thoughts. The soul, being immortal, was beyond the reach of kings. Conscience was not to be conquered, nor the religious spirit imprisoned. This had been discovered by the Emperor Charles, who had taken all the cities and great personages of Germany captive, but who had nevertheless been unable to take religion captive. "That is a sentiment," said Louis, "deeply rooted in the hearts of men, which is not to be plucked out by force of arms. Let your majesty, therefore not be deceived by the flattery of those who, like bad physicians, keep their patients in ignorance of their disease, whence comes their ruin."

It would be impossible, without insight into these private and most important transactions, to penetrate the heart of the mystery which enwrapped at this period the relations of the great powers with each other. Enough has been seen to silence for ever the plea, often entered in behalf of religious tyranny, that the tyrant acts in obedience to a sincere conviction of duty; that, in performing his deeds of darkness, he believes himself to be accomplishing the will of Heaven. Here we have seen Philip, offering to restore the Prince of Orange, and to establish freedom of religion in the Netherlands, if by such promises he can lay hold of the Imperial diadem. Here also we have Charles IX. and his mother--their hands reeking with the heretic-blood of St. Bartholomew--

making formal engagements with heretics to protect heresy everywhere, if by such pledges the crown of the Jagellons and the hand of Elizabeth can be secured.

While Louis was thus busily engaged in Germany, Orange was usually established at Delft. He felt the want of his brother daily, for the solitude of the Prince, in the midst of such fiery trials, amounted almost to desolation. Not often have circumstances invested an individual with so much responsibility and so little power. He was regarded as the protector and father of the country, but from his own brains and his own resources he was to furnish himself with the means of fulfilling those high functions. He was anxious thoroughly to discharge the duties of a dictatorship without grasping any more of its power than was indispensable to his purpose. But he was alone on that little isthmus, in single combat with the great Spanish monarchy. It was to him that all eyes turned, during the infinite horrors of the Harlem sieges and in the more prosperous leaguer of Alkmaar. What he could do he did. He devised every possible means to succor Harlem, and was only restrained from going personally to its rescue by the tears of the whole population of Holland. By his decision and the spirit which he diffused through the country, the people were lifted to a pitch of heroism by which Alkmaar was saved. Yet, during all this harassing period, he had no one to lean upon but himself. "Our affairs are in pretty good; condition in Holland and Zealand," he wrote, "if I only had some aid. 'Tis impossible for me to support alone so many labors, and the weight of such great affairs as come upon me hourly--financial, military, political. I have no one to help me, not a single man, wherefore I leave you to suppose in what trouble I find myself."

For it was not alone the battles and sieges which furnished him with occupation and filled him with anxiety. Alone, he directed in secret the politics of the country, and, powerless and outlawed though he seemed, was in daily correspondence not only with the estates of Holland and Zealand, whose deliberations he guided, but with the principal governments of Europe. The estates of the Netherlands, moreover, had been formally assembled by Alva in September, at Brussels, to devise ways and means for continuing the struggle. It seemed to the Prince a good opportunity to make an appeal to the patriotism of the whole country. He furnished the province of Holland, accordingly, with the outlines of an address which was forthwith despatched in their own and his name, to the general assembly of the Netherlands. The document was a nervous and rapid review of the course of late events in the provinces, with a cogent statement of the reasons which should influence them all to unite in the common cause against the common enemy. It referred to the old affection and true-heartedness with which they had formerly regarded each other, and to the certainty that the inquisition would be for ever established in the land, upon the ruins of all their ancient institutions, unless they now united to overthrow it for ever. It demanded of the people, thus assembled through their representatives, how they could endure the tyranny, murders, and extortions of the Duke of Alva. The princes of Flanders, Burgundy, Brabant, or Holland, had never made war or peace, coined money, or exacted a stiver from the people without the consent of the estates. How could the nation now consent to the daily impositions

which were practised? Had Amsterdam and Middelburg remained true; had those important cities not allowed themselves to be seduced from the cause of freedom, the northern provinces would have been impregnable. "Tis only by the Netherlands that the Netherlands are crushed," said the appeal. "Whence has the Duke of Alva the power of which he boasts, but from yourselves--from Netherland cities? Whence his ships, supplies, money, weapons, soldiers? From the Netherland people. Why has poor Netherland thus become degenerate and bastard? Whither has fled the noble spirit of our brave forefathers, that never brooked the tyranny of foreign nations, nor suffered a stranger even to hold office within our borders? If the little province of Holland can thus hold at bay the power of Spain, what could not all the Netherlands--Brabant, Flanders, Friesland, and the rest united accomplish?" In conclusion, the estates-general were earnestly adjured to come forward like brothers in blood, and join hands with Holland, that together they might rescue the fatherland and restore its ancient prosperity and bloom.

At almost the same time the Prince drew up and put in circulation one of the most vigorous and impassioned productions which ever came from his pen. It was entitled, an "Epistle, in form of supplication, to his royal Majesty of Spain, from the Prince of Orange and the estates of Holland and Zealand." The document produced a profound impression throughout Christendom. It was a loyal appeal to the monarch's loyalty--a demand that the land-privileges should be restored, and the Duke of Alva removed. It contained a startling picture of his atrocities and the nation's misery, and, with a few energetic strokes, demolished the pretence that these sorrows had been caused by the people's guilt. In this connexion the Prince alluded to those acts of condemnation which the Governor-General had promulgated under the name of pardons, and treated with scorn the hypothesis that any crimes had been committed for Alva to forgive. "We take God and your Majesty to witness," said the epistle, "that if we have done such misdeeds as are charged in the pardon, we neither desire nor deserve the pardon. Like the most abject creatures which crawl the earth, we will be content to atone for our misdeeds with our lives. We will not murmur, O merciful King, if we be seized one after another, and torn limb from limb, if it can be proved that we have committed the crimes of which we have been accused."

After having thus set forth the tyranny of the government and the innocence of the people, the Prince, in his own name and that of the estates, announced the determination at which they had arrived. "The tyrant," he continued, "would rather stain every river and brook with our blood, and hang our bodies upon every tree in the country, than not feed to the full his vengeance, and steep himself to the lips in our misery. Therefore we have taken up arms against the Duke of Alva and his adherents, to free ourselves, our wives and children, from his blood-thirsty hands. If he prove too strong nor us, we will rather die an honorable death and leave a praiseworthy fame, than bend our necks, and reduce our dear fatherland to such slavery. Herein are all our cities pledged to each other to stand every siege, to dare the utmost, to endure every possible misery, yea, rather to set fire to all our homes, and be consumed with them into ashes together, than ever submit to the decrees of this cruel tyrant."

These were brave words, and destined to be bravely fulfilled, as the life and death of the writer and the records of his country proved, from generation unto generation. If we seek for the mainspring of the energy which thus sustained the Prince in the unequal conflict to which he had devoted his life, we shall find it in the one pervading principle of his nature--confidence in God. He was the champion of the political rights of his country, but before all he was the defender of its religion. Liberty of conscience for his people was his first object. To establish Luther's axiom, that thoughts are toll-free, was his determination. The Peace of Passau, and far more than the Peace of Passau, was the goal for which he was striving. Freedom of worship for all denominations, toleration for all forms of faith, this was the great good in his philosophy. For himself, he had now become a member of the Calvinist, or Reformed Church, having delayed for a time his public adhesion to this communion, in order not to give offence to the Lutherans and to the Emperor. He was never a dogmatist, however, and he sought in Christianity for that which unites rather than for that which separates Christians. In the course of October he publicly joined the church at Dort.

The happy termination of the siege of Alkmaar was followed, three days afterwards, by another signal success on the part of the patriots. Count Bossu, who had constructed or collected a considerable fleet at Amsterdam, had, early in October, sailed into the Zuyder Zee, notwithstanding the sunken wrecks and other obstructions by which the patriots had endeavored to render the passage of the Y impracticable. The patriots of North Holland had, however, not been idle, and a fleet of five-and-twenty vessels, under Admiral Dirkzoon, was soon cruising in the same waters. A few skirmishes took place, but Bossu's ships, which were larger, and provided with heavier cannon, were apparently not inclined for the close quarters which the patriots sought. The Spanish Admiral, Hollander as he was, knew the mettle of his countrymen in a close encounter at sea, and preferred to trust to the calibre of his cannon. On the 11th October, however, the whole patriot fleet, favored by a strong easterly breeze, bore down upon the Spanish armada, which, numbering now thirty sail of all denominations, was lying off and on in the neighbourhood of Horn and Enkhuyzen. After a short and general engagement, nearly all the Spanish fleet retired with precipitation, closely pursued by most of the patriot Dutch vessels. Five of the King's ships were eventually taken, the rest effected their escape. Only the Admiral remained, who scorned to yield, although his forces had thus basely deserted him. His ship, the "Inquisition,"--for such was her insolent appellation, was far the largest and best manned of both the fleets. Most of the enemy had gone in pursuit of the fugitives, but four vessels of inferior size had attacked the "Inquisition" at the commencement of the action. Of these, one had soon been silenced, while the other three had grappled themselves inextricably to her sides and prow. The four drifted together, before wind and tide, a severe and savage action going on incessantly, during which the navigation of the ships was entirely abandoned. No scientific gunnery, no military or naval tactics were displayed or required in such a conflict. It was a life-and-death combat, such as always occurred when Spaniard and

Netherlander met, whether on land or water. Bossu and his men, armed in bullet-proof coats of mail, stood with shield and sword on the deck of the "Inquisition," ready to repel all attempts to board. The Hollander, as usual, attacked with pitch hoops, boiling oil, and molten lead. Repeatedly they effected their entrance to the Admiral's ship, and as often they were repulsed and slain in heaps, or hurled into the sea. The battle began at three in the afternoon, and continued without intermission through the whole night. The vessels, drifting together, struck on the shoal called the Nek, near Wydeness. In the heat of the action the occurrence was hardly heeded. In the morning twilight, John Haring, of Horn, the hero who had kept one thousand soldiers at bay upon the Diemer dyke, clambered on board the "Inquisition" and hauled her colors down. The gallant but premature achievement cost him his life. He was shot through the body and died on the deck of the ship, which was not quite ready to strike her flag. In the course of the forenoon, however, it became obvious to Bossu that further resistance was idle. The ships were aground near a hostile coast, his own fleet was hopelessly dispersed, three quarters of his crew were dead or disabled, while the vessels with which he was engaged were constantly recruited by boats from the shore, which brought fresh men and ammunition, and removed their killed and wounded. At eleven o'clock, Admiral Bossu surrendered, and with three hundred prisoners was carried into Holland. Bossu was himself imprisoned at Horn, in which city he was received, on his arrival, with great demonstrations of popular hatred. The massacre of Rotterdam, due to his cruelty and treachery, had not yet been forgotten or forgiven.

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

The Duke was, doubtless, lower sunk in the estimation of all classes than he had ever been before, during his long and generally successful life. The reverses sustained by his army, the belief that his master had grown cold towards him, the certainty that his career in the Netherlands was closing without a satisfactory result, the natural weariness produced upon men's minds by the contemplation of so monotonous and unmitigated a tyranny during so many years, all contributed to diminish his reputation.

He felt himself odious alike to princes and to plebeians. With his cabinet councillors he had long been upon unsatisfactory terms. President Tisnacq had died early, in the summer, and Viglius, much against his will, had been induced, provisionally, to supply his place. But there was now hardly a pretence of friendship between the learned Frisian and the Governor. Each cordially detested the other. Alva was weary of Flemish and Frisian advisers, however subservient, and was anxious to fill the whole council with Spaniards of the Vargas stamp. He had forced Viglius once more into office, only that, by a little delay, he might expel him and every Netherlander at the same moment. "Till this ancient set of dogmatizers be removed," he wrote to Philip, "with Viglius, their chief, who teaches them all their lessons, nothing will go right. 'Tis of no use adding one or two Spaniards to fill vacancies; that is only pouring a flask of good wine into a hogshead of vinegar; it changes to vinegar likewise. Your Majesty will soon be able to reorganize the council at a blow; so that Italians or Spaniards, as you choose, may entirely govern the country."

Such being his private sentiments with regard to his confidential advisers, it may be supposed that his intercourse with his council during the year was not like to be amicable. Moreover, he had kept himself, for the most part, at a distance from the seat of government. During the military operations in Holland, his head-quarters had been at Amsterdam. Here, as the year drew to its close, he had become as unpopular as in Brussels. The time-serving and unpatriotic burghers, who, at the beginning of the spring, set up his bust in their houses, and would give large sums for his picture in little, now broke his images and tore his portraits from their walls, for it was evident that the power of his name was gone, both with prince and people. Yet, certainly, those fierce demonstrations which had formerly surrounded his person with such an atmosphere of terror had not slackened or become less frequent than heretofore. He continued to prove that he could be barbarous, both on a grand and a minute scale. Even as in preceding years, he could ordain wholesale massacres with a breath, and superintend in person the executions of individuals. This was illustrated, among other instances, by the cruel fate of Uitenhoove. That unfortunate nobleman, who had been taken prisoner in the course of the summer, was accused of having been engaged in the capture of Brill, and was, therefore, condemned by the Duke to be roasted to death before a slow fire. He was accordingly fastened by a chain, a few feet in length, to a stake, around which the fagots were lighted. Here he was kept in slow torture for a long time, insulted by the gibes of the laughing Spaniards who surrounded him--until the executioner and his assistants, more humane than their superior, despatched the victim with their spears--a mitigation of punishment which was ill received by Alva. The Governor had, however, no reason to remain longer in Amsterdam. Harlem had fallen; Alkmaar was relieved; and Leyden--destined in its second siege to furnish so signal a chapter to the history of the war--was beleaguered, it was true, but, because known to be imperfectly supplied, was to be reduced by blockade rather than by active operations. Don Francis Valdez was accordingly left in command of the siege, which, however, after no memorable occurrences, was raised, as will soon be related.

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

On the 17th of November, Don Luis de Requesens y Cuniga, Grand Commander of Saint Jago, the appointed successor of Alva, arrived in Brussels, where he was received with great rejoicings. The Duke, on the same day, wrote to the King, "kissing his feet" for thus relieving him of his functions. There was, of course, a profuse interchange of courtesy between the departing and the newly-arrived Governors. Alva was willing to remain a little while, to assist his successor with his advice, but preferred that the Grand Commander should immediately assume the reins of office. To this Requesens, after much respectful reluctance, at length consented. On the 29th of November he accordingly took the oaths, at Brussels, as Lieutenant-Governor and Captain-General, in presence of the Duke of Aerschot, Baron Berlaymont, the President of the Council, and other functionaries.

On the 18th of December the Duke of Alva departed from the provinces for ever. With his further career this history has no concern, and it is not desirable to enlarge upon the personal biography of one whose name certainly never excites pleasing emotions. He had kept his bed for the greater part of the time during the last few weeks of his government--partly on account of his gout, partly to avoid being seen in his humiliation, but mainly, it was said, to escape the pressing demands of his creditors. He expressed a fear of travelling homeward through France, on the ground that he might very probably receive a shot out of a window as he went by. He complained pathetically that, after all his labors, he had not "gained the approbation of the King," while he had incurred "the malevolence and universal hatred of every individual in the country." Mondoucet, to whom he made the observation, was of the same opinion; and informed his master that the Duke "had engendered such an extraordinary hatred in the hearts of all persons in the land, that they would have fireworks in honor of his departure if they dared."

On his journey from the Netherlands, he is said to have boasted that he had caused eighteen thousand six hundred inhabitants of the provinces to be executed during the period of his government. The number of those who had perished by battle, siege, starvation, and massacre, defied computation. The Duke was well received by his royal master, and remained in favor until a new adventure of Don Frederic brought father and son into disgrace. Having deceived and abandoned a maid of honor, he suddenly espoused his cousins in order to avoid that reparation by

marriage which was demanded for his offence. In consequence, both the Duke and Don Frederic were imprisoned and banished, nor was Alva released till a general of experience was required for the conquest of Portugal. Thither, as it were with fetters on his legs, he went. After having accomplished the military enterprise entrusted to him, he fell into a lingering fever, at the termination of which he was so much reduced that he was only kept alive by milk, which he drank from a woman's breast. Such was the gentle second childhood of the man who had almost literally been drinking blood for seventy years. He died on the 12th December, 1582.

The preceding pages have been written in vain, if an elaborate estimate be now required of his character. His picture has been painted, as far as possible, by his own hand. His deeds, which are not disputed, and his written words, illustrate his nature more fully than could be done by the most eloquent pen. No attempt has been made to exaggerate his crimes, or to extenuate his superior qualities. Virtues he had none, unless military excellence be deemed, as by the Romans, a virtue. In war, both as a science and a practical art, he excelled all the generals who were opposed to him in the Netherlands, and he was inferior to no commander in the world during the long and belligerent period to which his life belonged. Louis of Nassau possessed high reputation throughout Europe as a skilful and daring General. With raw volunteers he had overthrown an army of Spanish regulars, led by a Netherland chieftain of fame and experience; but when Alva took the field in person the scene was totally changed. The Duke dealt him such a blow at Jemmingen as would have disheartened for ever a less indomitable champion. Never had a defeat been more absolute. The patriot army was dashed out of existence, almost to a man, and its leader, naked and beggared, though not disheartened, sent back into Germany to construct his force and his schemes anew.

Having thus flashed before the eyes of the country the full terrors of his name, and vindicated the ancient military renown of his nation, the Duke was at liberty to employ the consummate tactics, in which he could have given instruction to all the world, against his most formidable antagonist. The country, paralyzed with fear, looked anxiously but supinely upon the scientific combat between the two great champions of Despotism and Protestantism which succeeded. It was soon evident that the conflict could terminate in but one way. The Prince had considerable military abilities, and enthusiastic courage; he lost none of his well-deserved reputation by the unfortunate issue of his campaign; he measured himself in arms with the great commander of the age, and defied him, day after day, in vain, to mortal combat; but it was equally certain that the Duke's quiet game was, played in the most masterly manner. His positions and his encampments were taken with faultless judgment, his skirmishes wisely and coldly kept within the prescribed control, while the inevitable dissolution of the opposing force took place exactly as he had foreseen, and within the limits which he had predicted. Nor in the disastrous commencement of the year 1572 did the Duke less signally manifest his military genius. Assailed as he was at every point, with the soil suddenly upheaving all around him, as by an earthquake, he did not lose his firmness nor his perspicacity. Certainly, if he had not been so soon assisted by that other earthquake, which on Saint



Bartholomew's Day caused all Christendom to tremble, and shattered the recent structure of Protestant Freedom in the Netherlands, it might have been worse for his reputation. With Mons safe, the Flemish frontier guarded; France faithful, and thirty thousand men under the Prince of Orange in Brabant, the heroic brothers might well believe that the Duke was "at their mercy." The treason of Charles IX. "smote them as with a club," as the Prince exclaimed in the bitterness of his spirit. Under the circumstances, his second campaign was a predestined failure, and Alva easily vanquished him by a renewed application of those dilatory arts which he so well understood.

The Duke's military fame was unquestionable when he came to the provinces, and both in stricken fields and in long campaigns, he showed how thoroughly it had been deserved; yet he left the Netherlands a baffled man. The Prince might be many times defeated, but he was not to be conquered. As Alva penetrated into the heart of the ancient Batavian land he found himself overmatched as he had never been before, even by the most potent generals of his day. More audacious, more inventive, more desperate than all the commanders of that or any other age, the spirit of national freedom, now taught the oppressor that it was invincible; except by annihilation. The same lesson had been read in the same thickets by the Nervii to Julius Caesar, by the Batavians to the legions of Vespasian; and now a loftier and a purer flame than that which inspired the national struggles against Rome glowed within the breasts of the descendants of the same people, and inspired them with the strength which comes, from religious enthusiasm. More experienced, more subtle, more politic than Hermann; more devoted, more patient, more magnanimous than Civilis, and equal to either in valor and determination, William of Orange was a worthy embodiment of the Christian, national resistance of the German race to a foreign tyranny. Alva had entered the Netherlands to deal with them as with conquered provinces. He found that the conquest was still to be made, and he left the land without having accomplished it. Through the sea of blood, the Hollanders felt that they were passing to the promised land. More royal soldiers fell during the seven months' siege of Harlem than the rebels had lost in the defeat of Jemmingen, and in the famous campaign of Brabant. At Alkmaar the rolling waves of insolent conquest were stayed, and the tide then ebbed for ever.

The accomplished soldier struggled hopelessly, with the wild and passionate hatred which his tyranny had provoked. Neither his legions nor his consummate strategy availed him against an entirely desperate people. As a military commander, therefore, he gained, upon the whole, no additional laurels during his long administration of the Netherlands. Of all the other attributes to be expected in a man appointed to deal with a free country, in a state of incipient rebellion, he manifested a signal deficiency. As a financier, he exhibited a wonderful ignorance of the first principles of political economy. No man before, ever gravely proposed to establish confiscation as a permanent source of revenue to the state; yet the annual product from the escheated property of slaughtered heretics was regularly relied upon, during his administration, to replenish the King's treasury, and to support the war of extermination against the King's subjects. Nor did statesman ever before expect a vast income from the commerce of a nation devoted to

almost universal massacre. During the daily decimation of the people's lives, he thought a daily decimation of their industry possible. His persecutions swept the land of those industrious classes which had made it the rich and prosperous commonwealth it had been so lately; while, at the same time, he found a "Peruvian mine," as he pretended, in the imposition of a tenth penny upon every one of its commercial transactions. He thought that a people, crippled as this had been by the operations of the Blood Council; could pay ten per cent., not annually but daily; not upon its income, but upon its capital; not once only, but every time the value constituting the capital changed hands. He had boasted that he should require no funds from Spain, but that, on the contrary, he should make annual remittances to the royal treasury at home, from the proceeds of his imposts and confiscations; yet, notwithstanding these resources, and notwithstanding twenty-five millions of gold in five years, sent by Philip from Madrid, the exchequer of the provinces was barren and bankrupt when his successor arrived. Requesens found neither a penny in the public treasury nor the means of raising one.

As an administrator of the civil and judicial affairs of the country, Alva at once reduced its institutions to a frightful simplicity. In the place of the ancient laws of which the Netherlanders were so proud, he substituted the Blood Council. This tribunal was even more arbitrary than the Inquisition. Never was a simpler apparatus for tyranny devised, than this great labor-saving machine. Never was so great a quantity of murder and robbery achieved with such despatch and regularity. Sentences, executions, and confiscations, to an incredible extent, were turned out daily with appalling precision. For this invention, Alva is alone responsible. The tribunal and its councillors were the work and the creatures of his hand, and faithfully did they accomplish the dark purpose of their existence. Nor can it be urged, in extenuation of the Governor's crimes, that he was but the blind and fanatically loyal slave of his sovereign. A noble nature could not have contaminated itself with such slaughter-house work, but might have sought to mitigate the royal policy, without forswearing allegiance. A nature less rigid than iron, would at least have manifested compunction, as it found itself converted into a fleshless instrument of massacre. More decided than his master, however, he seemed, by his promptness, to rebuke the dilatory genius of Philip. The King seemed, at times, to loiter over his work, teasing and tantalising his appetite for vengeance, before it should be gratified: Alva, rapid and brutal, scorned such epicureanism. He strode with gigantic steps over haughty statutes and popular constitutions; crushing alike the magnates who claimed a bench of monarchs for their jury, and the ignoble artisans who could appeal only to the laws of their land. From the pompous and theatrical scaffolds of Egmont and Horn, to the nineteen halters prepared by Master Karl, to hang up the chief bakers and brewers of Brussels on their own thresholds--from the beheading of the twenty nobles on the Horse-market, in the opening of the Governor's career, to the roasting alive of Uitenhoove at its close--from the block on which fell the honored head of Antony Straalen, to the obscure chair in which the ancient gentlewoman of Amsterdam suffered death for an act of vicarious mercy--from one year's end to another's--from the most signal to the most squalid scenes of sacrifice, the eye and hand of the

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

No doubt the work of almost indiscriminate massacre had been duly mapped out. Not often in history has a governor arrived to administer the affairs of a province, where the whole population, three millions strong, had been formally sentenced to death. As time wore on, however, he even surpassed the bloody instructions which he had received. He waved aside the recommendations of the Blood Council to mercy; he dissuaded the monarch from attempting the path of clemency, which, for secret reasons, Philip was inclined at one period to attempt. The Governor had, as he assured the King, been using gentleness in vain, and he was now determined to try what a little wholesome severity could effect. These words were written immediately after the massacres at Harlem.

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

The tens of thousands in those miserable provinces who fell victims to the gallows, the sword, the stake, the living grave, or to living banishment, have never been counted; for those statistics of barbarity are often effaced from human record. Enough, however, is known, and enough has been recited in the preceding pages. No mode in which human beings have ever caused their fellow-creatures to suffer, was omitted from daily practice. Men, women, and children, old and young, nobles and paupers, opulent burghers, hospital patients, lunatics, dead bodies, all were indiscriminately made to furnish food for the scaffold and the stake. Men were tortured, beheaded, hanged by the neck and by the legs, burned before slow fires, pinched to death with red hot tongs, broken upon the wheel, starved, and flayed alive. Their skins stripped from the living body, were stretched upon drums, to be beaten in the march of their brethren to the gallows. The bodies of many who had died a natural death were exhumed, and their festering remains hanged upon the gibbet, on pretext that they had died without receiving the sacrament, but in reality that their property might become the legitimate prey of the treasury. Marriages of long standing were dissolved by order of government, that rich heiresses might be married against their will to foreigners whom they abhorred. Women and children were executed for the crime of assisting their fugitive husbands and parents with a penny in their utmost need, and even for consoling them with a letter, in their exile. Such was the regular course of affairs as administered by the Blood Council. The additional barbarities committed amid the sack and ruin of those blazing and starving cities, are almost beyond belief; unborn infants were torn from the living bodies of their mothers; women and children were violated by thousands; and whole populations burned and

hacked to pieces by soldiers in every mode which cruelty, in its wanton ingenuity, could devise. Such was the administration, of which Vargas affirmed, at its close, that too much mercy, "*nimia misericordia*," had been its ruin.

Even Philip, inspired by secret views, became wearied of the Governor, who, at an early period, had already given offence by his arrogance. To commemorate his victories, the Viceroy had erected a colossal statue, not to his monarch, but to himself. To proclaim the royal pardon, he had seated himself upon a golden throne. Such insolent airs could be ill forgiven by the absolute King. Too cautious to provoke an open rupture, he allowed the Governor, after he had done all his work, and more than all his work, to retire without disgrace, but without a triumph. For the sins of that administration, master and servant are in equal measure responsible.

The character of the Duke of Alva, so far as the Netherlands are concerned, seems almost like a caricature. As a creation of fiction, it would seem grotesque: yet even that hardy, historical scepticism, which delights in reversing the judgment of centuries, and in re-establishing reputations long since degraded to the dust, must find it difficult to alter this man's position. No historical decision is final; an appeal to a more remote posterity, founded upon more accurate evidence, is always valid; but when the verdict has been pronounced upon facts which are undisputed, and upon testimony from the criminal's lips, there is little chance of a reversal of the sentence. It is an affectation of philosophical candor to extenuate vices which are not only avowed, but claimed as virtues.

[The time is past when it could be said that the cruelty of Alva, or the enormities of his administration, have been exaggerated by party violence. Human invention is incapable of outstripping the truth upon this subject. To attempt the defence of either the man or his measures at the present day is to convict oneself of an amount of ignorance or of bigotry against which history and argument are alike powerless. The publication of the Duke's letters in the correspondence of Simancas and in the Besancon papers, together with that compact mass of horror, long before the world under the title of "*Sententien van Alva*," in which a portion only of the sentences of death and banishment pronounced by him during his reign, have been copied from the official records--these in themselves would be a sufficient justification of all the charges ever brought by the most bitter contemporary of Holland or Flanders. If the investigator should remain sceptical, however, let him examine the "*Registre des Condamnes et Bannia a Cause des Troubles des Pays Bas*," in three, together with the Records of the "*Conseil des Troubles*," in forty-three folio volumes, in the Royal Archives at Brussels. After going through all these chronicles of iniquity, the most determined historic doubter will probably throw up the case.]

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Advised his Majesty to bestow an annual bribe upon Lord Burleigh  
Angle with their dissimulation as with a hook  
Luther's axiom, that thoughts are toll-free  
Only kept alive by milk, which he drank from a woman's breast  
Scepticism, which delights in reversing the judgment of centuries  
So much responsibility and so little power  
Sometimes successful, even although founded upon sincerity  
We are beginning to be vexed

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