

intrusted the government, the interests of the country were little likely to be served. Had it been his father, the emperor, who was on the throne, such knowledge would not have been in his possession four and twenty hours, before he would have been on his way to the Netherlands. But Philip was of a more sluggish temper. He was capable, indeed, of much passive exertion,—of incredible toil in the cabinet,—and from his palace, as was said, would have given law to Christendom. But rather than encounter the difficulties of a voyage, he was willing, it appears, to risk the loss of the finest of his provinces.¹⁵

Yet he wrote to his sister to encourage her with the prospect of his visiting the country as soon as he could be released from a war in which he was engaged with the Turks. He invited her, at the same time, to send him further particulars of the misconduct of Viglius, and expressed the hope that some means might be found of silencing his opposition.¹⁶

It is not easy at this day to strike the balance between the hostile parties, so as to decide on the justice of these mutual accusations, and to assign to each the proper share of responsibility for the mismanagement of the government. That it was mismanaged is certain. That

¹⁵ Granvelle regarded such a step as the only effectual remedy for the disorders in the Low Countries. In a remarkable letter to Philip, dated July 20, 1565, he presents such a view of the manner in which the government is conducted as might well alarm his master. Justice and religion are at the lowest ebb. Public offices are disposed of at private sale. The members of the council indulge in the greatest freedom in their discussions on matters of religion. It is plain that the Confession of Augsburg would be acceptable to some of them. The truth is

never allowed to reach the king's ears; as the letters sent to Madrid are written to suit the majority of the council, and so as not to give an unfavorable view of the country. Viglius is afraid to write. There are spies at the court, he says, who would betray his correspondence, and it might cost him his life. Granvelle concludes by urging the king to come in person, and with money enough to subsidize a force to support him. *Papiers d'Etat de Granvelle*, tom. VIII. p. 620 et seq.

¹⁶ *Correspondance de Philippe II.*, tom. I. p. 317.

offices were put up for sale is undeniable; for the duchess frankly discusses the expediency of it, in a letter to her brother. This, at least, absolves the act from the imputation of secrecy. The conflict of the council of state with the two other councils often led to disorders, since the decrees passed by the privy council, which had cognizance of matters of justice, were frequently frustrated by the amnesties and pardons granted by the council of state. To remedy this, the nobles contended that it was necessary to subject the decrees of the other councils to the revision of the council of state, and, in a word, to concentrate in this last body the whole authority of government.¹⁷ The council of state, composed chiefly of the great aristocracy, looked down with contempt on those subordinate councils, made up for the most part of men of humbler condition, pledged by their elevation to office to maintain the interests of the crown. They would have placed the administration of the country in the hands of an oligarchy, made up of the great Flemish nobles. This would be to break up that system of distribution into separate departments established by Charles the Fifth for the more perfect despatch of business. It would, in short, be such a change in the constitution of the country as would of itself amount to a revolution.

In the state of things above described, the Reformation gained rapidly in the country. The nobles generally, as has been already intimated, were loyal to the Roman Catholic Church. Many of the younger nobility, however, who had been educated at Geneva, returned tinctured with heretical doctrines from the school of Calvin.¹⁸ But whether Catholic or Protestant, the

¹⁷ Hopper, *Recueil et Mémorial*, p. 39.—*Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau*, tom. I. p. 222.—*Correspondance de Philippe II.*,

tom. I. p. 347 et alibi.

¹⁸ The Spanish ambassador to England, Guzman de Silva, in a letter dated from the Low Countries,

Flemish aristocracy looked with distrust on the system of persecution, and held the Inquisition in the same abhorrence as did the great body of the people. It was fortunate for the Reformation in the Netherlands, that at its outset it received the support even of the Catholics, who resisted the Inquisition as an outrage on their political liberties.

Under the lax administration of the edicts, exiles who had fled abroad from persecution now returned to Flanders. Calvinist ministers and refugees from France crossed the borders, and busied themselves with the work of proselytism. Seditious pamphlets were circulated, calling on the regent to confiscate the ecclesiastical revenues, and apply them to the use of the state, as had been done in England.¹⁹ The Inquisition became an object of contempt, almost as much as of hatred. Two of the principal functionaries wrote to Philip, that, without further support, they could be of no use in a situation which exposed them only to derision and danger.²⁰ At Bruges and at Brussels the mob entered the prisons, and released the prisoners. A more flagrant violation of justice occurred at Antwerp. A converted friar, named Fabricius, who had been active in preaching and propagating the new doctrines, was tried and sentenced to the stake. On the way to execution, the people

refers this tendency among the younger nobles to their lax education at home, and to their travels abroad. "La noblesse du pays est généralement catholique: il n'y a que les jeunes gens dont, à cause de l'éducation relâchée qu'ils ont reçue, et de leur fréquentation dans les pays voisins, les principes soient un peu équivoques." Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. I. p. 383.

¹⁹ "Se dice publico que ay medios para descargar todas las deudas del

Rey sin cargo del pueblo tomando los bienes de la gente de yglesia ó parte conforme al ejemplo que se ha hecho en ynglaterra y francia y tambien que ellos eran muy ricos y volberian mas templados y hombres de bien." Renom de Francia, Alborotos de Flandes, MS.

²⁰ "Leur office est devenu odieux au peuple; ils rencontrent tant de résistances et de calomnies, qu'ils ne peuvent l'exercer sans danger pour leurs personnes." Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. I. p. 353.

called out to him, from the balconies and the doorways, to "take courage, and endure manfully to the last."²¹ When the victim was bound to the stake, and the pile was kindled, the mob discharged such a volley of stones at the officers as speedily put them to flight. But the unhappy man, though unscathed by the fire, was stabbed to the heart by the executioner, who made his escape in the tumult. The next morning, placards written in blood were found affixed to the public buildings, threatening vengeance on all who had had any part in the execution of Fabricius; and one of the witnesses against him, a woman, hardly escaped with life from the hands of the populace.²²

The report of these proceedings caused a great sensation at Madrid; and Philip earnestly called on his sister to hunt out and pursue the offenders. This was not easy, where most, even of those who did not join in the act, fully shared in the feeling which led to it. Yet Philip continued to urge the necessity of enforcing the laws for the preservation of the Faith, as the thing dearest to his heart. He would sometimes indicate in his letters the name of a suspicious individual, his usual dress, his habits and appearance, — descending into details which may well surprise us, considering the multitude of affairs of a weightier character that pressed upon his mind.²³ One cannot doubt that Philip was at heart an inquisitor.

Yet the fires of persecution were not permitted wholly to slumber. The historian of the Reformation enumerates seventeen who suffered capitally for their religious opinions in the course of the year 1564.²⁴ This, though

²¹ Brandt, Reformation in the Low Countries, tom. I. p. 147.

²² Ibid., ubi supra.—Strada, De Bello Belgico, p. 174.—Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. I. pp. 321-327.

²³ Strada, De Bello Belgico, p. 172. —Correspondance de Philippe II., tom I. p. 327 et alibi.

²⁴ Brandt, Reformation in the Low Countries, tom. I. pp. 146,—149.

pitiable, was a small number—if indeed it be the whole number—compared with the thousands who are said to have perished in the same space of time in the preceding reign. It was too small to produce any effect as a persecution, while the sight of the martyr, singing hymns in the midst of the flames, only kindled a livelier zeal in the spectators, and a deeper hatred for their oppressors.

The finances naturally felt the effects of the general disorder of the country. The public debt, already large, as we have seen, was now so much increased, that the yearly deficiency in the revenue, according to the regent's own statement, amounted to six hundred thousand florins;²⁵ and she knew of no way of extricating the country from its embarrassments, unless the king should come to its assistance. The convocation of the states-general was insisted on as the only remedy for these disorders. That body alone, it was contended, was authorized to vote the requisite subsidies, and to redress the manifold grievances of the nation.—Yet, in point of fact, its powers had hitherto been little more than to propose the subsidies for the approbation of the several provinces, and to *remonstrate* on the grievances of the nation. To invest the states-general with the power of *redressing* these grievances would bestow on them legislative functions which they had rarely, if ever, exercised. This would be to change the constitution of the country, by the new weight it would give to the popular element; a change which the great lords, who had already the lesser nobles entirely at their disposal,²⁶ would probably

²⁵ "La dépense excède annuellement les revenus, de 600,000 florins." Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. I. p. 328.

²⁶ "Quant à la moyenne noblesse

des Pays-Bas, les Seigneurs l'auront tantost à leur cordelle." Chantonay to Granvelle, October 6, 1565, Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, tom. I. p. 426.

know well how to turn to account.²⁷ Yet Margaret had now so entirely resigned herself to their influence, that, notwithstanding the obvious consequences of these measures, she recommended to Philip both to assemble the states-general and to remodel the council of state;²⁸—and this to a monarch more jealous of his authority than any other prince in Europe!

To add to the existing troubles, orders were received from the court of Madrid to publish the decrees of the Council of Trent throughout the Netherlands. That celebrated council had terminated its long session in 1563, with the results that might have been expected,—those of widening the breach between Protestant and Catholic, and of enlarging, or at least more firmly establishing, the authority of the pope. One good result may be mentioned, that of providing for a more strict supervision of the morals and discipline of the clergy;—a circumstance which caused the decrees to be in extremely bad odor with that body.

It was hoped that Philip would imitate the example of France, and reject decrees which thus exalted the power of the pope. Men were led to expect this the more, from the mortification which the king had lately experienced from a decision of the pontiff on a question of precedence between the Castilian and French ambassadors at his court. This delicate matter, long pending, had been finally determined in favor of France by Pius

²⁷ That Granvelle understood well these consequences of convening the states-general is evident from the manner in which he repeatedly speaks of this event in his correspondence with the king. See, in particular, a letter to Philip, dated as early as August 20, 1563, where he sums up his remarks on the matter by saying: "In fine, they would entirely change the form of govern-

ment, so that there would be little remaining for the regent to do, as the representative of your majesty, or for your majesty yourself to do, since they would have completely put you under guardianship." *Papiers d'Etat de Granvelle*, tom. VII. p. 186.

²⁸ *Correspondance de Philippe II.*, tom. I. p. 329.

the Fifth, who may have thought it more politic to secure a fickle ally than to reward a firm one. The decision touched Philip to the quick. He at once withdrew his ambassador from Rome, and refused to receive an envoy from his holiness.²⁹ It seemed that a serious rupture was likely to take place between the parties. But it was not in the nature of Philip to be long at feud with the court of Rome. In a letter to the duchess of Parma, dated August 6, 1564, he plainly intimated that in matters of faith he was willing at all times to sacrifice his private feelings to the public weal.³⁰ He subsequently commanded the decrees of the Council of Trent to be received as law throughout his dominions, saying that he could make no exception for the Netherlands, when he made none for Spain.³¹

The promulgation of the decrees was received, as had been anticipated, with general discontent. The clergy complained of the interference with their immunities. The men of Brabant stood stoutly on the chartered rights secured to them by the "*Joyeuse Entrée*." And the people generally resisted the decrees, from a vague idea of their connection with the Inquisition; while, as usual when mischief was on foot, they loudly declaimed against Granvelle as being at the bottom of it.

In this unhappy condition of affairs, it was determined by the council of state to send some one to Madrid to lay the grievances of the nation before the king, and to submit to him what in their opinion would be the most effectual remedy. They were the more induced to this by the unsatisfactory nature of the royal correspondence.

²⁹ Cabrera, Filipe Segundo, lib. VI. cap. 14, 16.—Strada, De Bello Belgico, tom. I. p. 176.

³⁰ Strada, De Bello Belgico, tom. I. p. 179.

³¹ "Si, après avoir accepté le con-

cile sans limitations dans tous ses autres royaumes et seigneuries, il allait y opposer des réserves aux Pays-Bas, cela produirait un fâcheux effet." Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. I. p. 328.

Philip, to the great discontent of the lords, had scarcely condescended to notice their letters.³² Even to Margaret's ample communications he rarely responded, and when he did, it was in vague and general terms, conveying little more than the necessity of executing justice and watching over the purity of the Faith.

The person selected for the unenviable mission to Madrid was Egmont, whose sentiments of loyalty, and of devotion to the Catholic faith, it was thought, would recommend him to the king; while his brilliant reputation, his rank, and his popular manners would find favor with the court and the people. Egmont himself was the less averse to the mission, that he had some private suits of his own to urge with the monarch.

This nomination was warmly supported by William, between whom and the count a perfectly good understanding seems to have subsisted, in spite of the efforts of the Cardinalists to revive their ancient feelings of jealousy. Yet these feelings still glowed in the bosoms of the wives of the two nobles, as was evident from the warmth with which they disputed the question of precedence with each other. Both were of the highest rank, and, as there was no umpire to settle the delicate question, it was finally arranged by the two ladies appearing in public always arm in arm,—an equality which the haughty dames were careful to maintain, in spite of the ridiculous embarrassments to which they

³² Yet whatever slight Philip may have put upon the lords in this respect, he showed William, in particular, a singular proof of confidence. The prince's *cuisine*, as I have elsewhere stated, was renowned over the Continent; and Philip requested of him his *chef*, to take the place of his own, lately deceased. But the king seems to lay less stress on the skill of this functionary than on his

trustworthiness,—a point of greater moment with a monarch. This was a compliment—in that suspicious age—to William, which, we imagine, he would have been slow to return by placing his life in the hands of a cook from the royal kitchens of Madrid. See Philip's letter in the *Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciturne*, tom. II. p. 89.

were occasionally exposed by narrow passages and doorways.³³ If the question of precedence had related to character, it would have been easily settled. The troubles from the misconduct of Anne of Saxony bore as heavily on the prince, her husband, at this very time, as the troubles of the state.³⁴

Before Egmont's departure, a meeting of the council of state was called, to furnish him with the proper instructions. The president, Viglius, gave it as his opinion, that the mission was superfluous; and that the great nobles had only to reform their own way of living to bring about the necessary reforms in the country. Egmont was instructed by the regent to represent to the king the deplorable condition of the land, the prostration of public credit, the decay of religion, and the symptoms of discontent and disloyalty in the people. As the most effectual remedy for these evils, he was to urge the king to come in person, and that speedily, to Flanders. "If his majesty does not approve of this," said Margaret, "impress upon him the necessity of making further remittances, and of giving me precise instructions as to the course I am to pursue."³⁵

³³ Margaret would fain have settled the dispute by giving the countess of Egmont precedence at table over her fair rival. (Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, tom. I. p. 445.) But both Anne of Saxony and her household stoutly demurred to this decision,—perhaps to the right of the regent to make it. "Les femmes ne se cèdent en rien et se tiegnent par le bras, *ingrédientes pari passu*, et si l'on rencontre une porte trop estroicte, l'on se serre l'ung sur l'autre pour passer également par ensamble, affin que il n'y ayt du devant ou derrière." Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, Supplément, p. 22.

³⁴ There is a curious epistle, in Groen's collection, from William

to his wife's uncle, the elector of Saxony, containing sundry charges against his niece. The termagant lady was in the habit, it seems, of rating her husband roundly before company. William, with some *naïveté*, declares he could have borne her ill-humor to a reasonable extent in private, but in public it was intolerable. Unhappily, Anne gave more serious cause of disturbance to her lord than that which arose from her temper, and which afterwards led to their separation. On the present occasion, it may be added, the letter was not sent,—as the lady, who had learned the nature of it, promised amendment. Ibid., tom. II. p. 31.

³⁵ "Au cas que le Roi s'en excuse,

The prince of Orange took part in the discussion with a warmth he had rarely shown. It was time, he said, that the king should be disabused of the errors under which he labored with respect to the Netherlands. The edicts must be mitigated. It was not possible, in the present state of feeling, either to execute the edicts or to maintain the Inquisition.³⁶ The Council of Trent was almost equally odious; nor could they enforce its decrees in the Netherlands while the countries on the borders rejected them. The people would no longer endure the perversion of justice, and the miserable wrangling of the councils.—This last blow was aimed at the president.—The only remedy was to enlarge the council of state, and to strengthen its authority. For his own part, he concluded, he could not understand how any prince could claim the right of interfering with the consciences of his subjects in matters of religion.³⁷—The impassioned tone of his eloquence, so contrary to the usually calm manner of William the Silent, and the boldness with which he avowed his opinions, caused a great sensation in the assembly.³⁸ That night was passed by Viglius, who gives his own account of the matter, in tossing on his bed, painfully ruminating on his forlorn position in the council, with scarcely one to support him in the contest which he was compelled to wage, not merely with the nobles, but with the regent herself. The next morning, while dressing, he was attacked by a fit of apoplexy,

il doit demander que S. M. donne à la duchesse des instructions précises sur la conduite qu'elle a à tenir." Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. I. p. 337.

The original instructions prepared by Viglius were subsequently modified by his friend Hopper, at the suggestion of the prince of Orange. See Vita Viglii, p. 41.

³⁶ Ibid., ubi supra.

³⁷ "Non posse ei placere, velle Principes animis hominum impetare, libertatemque Fidei et Religionis ipsis adimere." Ibid., p. 42.

³⁸ Burgundius puts into the mouth of William on this occasion a fine piece of declamation, in which he reviews the history of heresy from the time of Constantine the Great

which partially deprived him of the use of both his speech and his limbs.³⁹ It was some time before he could resume his place at the board. This new misfortune furnished him with a substantial argument for soliciting the king's permission to retire from office. In this he was warmly seconded by Margaret, who, while she urged the president's incapacity, nothing touched by his situation, eagerly pressed her brother to call him to account for his delinquencies, and especially his embezzlement of the church property.⁴⁰

Philip, who seems to have shunned any direct intercourse with his Flemish subjects, had been averse to have Egmont, or any other envoy, sent to Madrid. On learning that the mission was at length settled, he wrote to Margaret that he had made up his mind to receive the count graciously, and to show no discontent with the conduct of the lords. That the journey, however, was not without its perils, may be inferred from a singular document that has been preserved to us. It is signed by a number of Egmont's personal friends, each of whom traced his signature in his own blood. In this paper the parties pledge their faith, as true knights and gentlemen, that if any harm be done to Count Egmont during his absence, they will take ample vengeance on Cardinal Granvelle, or whoever might be the author of it.⁴¹ The

downwards. This display of school-boy erudition, so unlike the masculine simplicity of the prince of Orange, may be set down among those fine things, the credit of which may be fairly given to the historian rather than to the hero.—Burgundius, *Hist. Belgica*, (Ingolst., 1633,) pp. 126—131.

³⁹ "Itaque mane de lecto surgens, inter vestiendum apoplexiâ attackus est, ut occurrentes domestici amicique in summo eum discrimine versari judicarent." *Vita Viglii*, p. 42.

⁴⁰ "Elle conseille au Roi d'ordonner à Viglius de rendre ses comptes, et de restituer les meubles des neuf maisons de sa prévôté de Saint-Bavon, qu'il a dévouillées." *Correspondance de Philippe II.*, tom. I. p. 350.

⁴¹ "Lui promettons, en foy de gentilhomme et chevalier d'honneur, si durant son aller et retour lui adviene quelque notable inconvenient, que nous en prendrons la vengeance sur le Cardinal de Granvelle ou ceux qui en seront participans

cardinal seems to have been the personification of evil with the Flemings of every degree. This instrument, which was deposited with the Countess Egmont, was subscribed with the names of seven nobles, most of them afterwards conspicuous in the troubles of the country. One might imagine that such a document was more likely to alarm than to reassure the wife to whom it was addressed.⁴²

In the beginning of January, Egmont set out on his journey. He was accompanied for some distance by a party of his friends, who at Cambray gave him a splendid entertainment. Among those present was the archbishop of Cambray, a prelate who had made himself unpopular by the zeal he had shown in the persecution of the Reformers. As the wine-cup passed freely round, some of the younger guests amused themselves with frequently pledging the prelate, and endeavoring to draw him into a greater degree of conviviality than was altogether becoming his station. As he at length declined their pledges, they began openly to taunt him; and one of the revellers, irritated by the archbishop's reply, would have thrown a large silver dish at his head, had not his arm been arrested by Egmont. Another of the company, however, succeeded in knocking off the prelate's cap;⁴³ and a scene of tumult ensued, from which the archbishop was extricated, not without difficulty, by the more sober and considerate part of the company. The whole affair—mortifying in the extreme to Egmont—is

ou penseront de l'estre, et non sur autre." Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, tom. I. p. 345.

⁴² This curious document, published by Arnoldi, (*Hist. Denkw.*, p. 282,) has been transferred by Groen to the pages of his collection. See Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, ubi supra.

⁴³ "Ibi tum offensus conviva, ar-

reptam argenteam pelvim (quæ manibus abluendis mensam fuerat imposita) injicere Archiepiscopo in caput conatur: retinet pelvim Egmondanus: quod dum facit, en alter conviva pugno in frontem Archiepiscopo eliso, pileum de capite deturbat." Vander Haer, *De Initiis Tumult.*, p. 190.

characteristic of the country at this period; when business of the greatest importance was settled at the banquet, as we often find in the earlier history of the revolution.

Egmont's reception at Madrid was of the most flattering kind. Philip's demeanor towards his great vassal was marked by unusual benignity; and the courtiers, readily taking their cue from their sovereign, vied with one another in attentions to the man whose prowess might be said to have won for Spain the great victories of Gravelines and St. Quentin. In fine, Egmont, whose brilliant exterior and noble bearing gave additional lustre to his reputation, was the object of general admiration during his residence of several weeks at Madrid. It seemed as if the court of Castile was prepared to change its policy, from the flattering attentions it thus paid to the representative of the Netherlands.

During his stay, Egmont was admitted to several audiences, in which he exposed to the monarch the evils that beset the country, and the measures proposed for relieving them. As the two most effectual, he pressed him to mitigate the edicts, and to reorganize the council of state.⁴⁴ Philip listened with much benignity to these suggestions of the Flemish noble; and if he did not acquiesce, he gave no intimation to the contrary, except by assuring the count of his determination to maintain the integrity of the Catholic faith. To Egmont personally he showed the greatest indulgence, and the count's private suits sped as favorably as he could have expected. But a remarkable anecdote proves that Philip,

⁴⁴ If we are to trust Morillon's report to Granvelle, Egmont denied, to some one who charged him with it, having recommended to Philip to soften the edicts. (Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, Supplément, p. 374.) But Morillon was

too much of a gossip to be the best authority; and, as this was understood to be one of the objects of the count's mission, it will be but justice to him to take the common opinion that he executed it.

at this very time, with all this gracious demeanor, had not receded one step from the ground he had always occupied.

Not long after Egmont's arrival, Philip privately called a meeting of the most eminent theologians in the capital. To this conclave he communicated briefly the state of the Low Countries, and their demand to enjoy freedom of conscience in matters of religion. He concluded by inquiring the opinion of his auditors on the subject. The reverend body, doubtless supposing that the king only wanted their sanction to extricate himself from the difficulties of his position, made answer, "that, considering the critical situation of Flanders, and the imminent danger, if thwarted, of its disloyalty to the crown and total defection from the Church, he might be justified in allowing the people freedom of worshipping in their own way." To this Philip sternly replied, "He had not called them to learn whether he *might* grant this to the Flemings, but whether he *must* do so."⁴⁵ The flexible conclave, finding they had mistaken their cue, promptly answered in the negative; on which Philip, prostrating himself on the ground before a crucifix, exclaimed, "I implore thy divine majesty, Ruler of all things, that thou keep me in the mind that I am in, never to allow myself either to become or to be called the lord of those who reject thee for their Lord."⁴⁶ —The story was told to the historian who records it by a member of the assembly, filled with admiration at the

⁴⁵ "Negavit accitos à se illos fuisse, ut docerent an permittere id posset, sed an sibi necessario permittendum præscriberent." Strada, De Bello Belgico, tom. I. p. 185.

⁴⁶ "Tum Rex in eorum conspectu, humi positus ante Christi Domini simulacrum, 'Ego verò, inquit,

Divinam Majestatem tuam oro, quæsoque, Rex omnium Deus, hanc ut mihi mentem perpetuam velis, ne illorum, qui te Dominum respuerint, uspiam esse me aut dici Dominum acquiescam.'" Ibid., ubi supra.

pious zeal of the monarch! From that moment the doom of the Netherlands was sealed.

Yet Egmont had so little knowledge of the true state of things, that he indulged in the most cheerful prognostications for the future. His frank and cordial nature readily responded to the friendly demonstrations he received, and his vanity was gratified by the homage universally paid to him. On leaving the country, he made a visit to the royal residences of Segovia and of the Escorial,—the magnificent pile already begun by Philip, and which continued to occupy more or less of his time during the remainder of his reign. Egmont, in a letter addressed to the king, declares himself highly delighted with what he has seen at both these places, and assures his sovereign that he returns to Flanders the most contented man in the world.⁴⁷

When arrived there, early in April, 1565, the count was loud in his profession of the amiable dispositions of the Castilian court towards the Netherlands. Egmont's countrymen—William of Orange and a few persons of cooler judgment alone excepted—readily indulged in the same dream of sanguine expectation, flattering themselves with the belief that a new policy was to prevail at Madrid, and that their country was henceforth to thrive under the blessings of religious toleration.—It was a pleasing illusion, destined to be of no long duration.

⁴⁷ "Il retourne en Flandre, Correspondance de Philippe II., l'homme le plus satisfait du monde." tom. I. p. 349.

CHAPTER IX.

PHILIP'S INFLEXIBILITY.

Philip's Duplicity.—His Procrastination.—Despatches from Segovia.—Effect on the Country.—The Compromise.—Orange and Egmont.

1565, 1566.

SHORTLY after Egmont's return to Brussels, Margaret called a meeting of the council of state, at which the sealed instructions brought by the envoy from Madrid were opened and read. They began by noticing the count's demeanor in terms so flattering as showed the mission had proved acceptable to the king. Then followed a declaration, strongly expressed and sufficiently startling. "I would rather lose a hundred thousand lives, if I had so many," said the monarch, "than allow a single change in matters of religion."¹ He, however, recommended that a commission be appointed, consisting of three bishops with a number of jurists, who should advise with the members of the council as to the best mode of instructing the people, especially in their spiritual concerns. It might be well, moreover, to substitute some secret methods for the public forms of execution, which now enabled the heretic to assume to himself the glory of martyrdom, and thereby produce

¹ "En ce qui touche la religion, il déclare qu'il ne peut consentir à ce qu'il y soit fait quelque changement; qu'il aimerait mieux perdre

cent mille vies, s'il les avait." Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. I. p. 347.

a mischievous impression on the people.² No other allusion was made to the pressing grievances of the nation, though, in a letter addressed at the same time to the duchess, Philip said that he had come to no decision as to the council of state, where the proposed change seemed likely to be attended with inconvenience.³

This, then, was the result of Egmont's mission to Madrid! This the change so much vaunted in the policy of Philip! "The count has been the dupe of Spanish cunning," exclaimed the prince of Orange. It was too true; and Egmont felt it keenly, as he perceived the ridicule to which he was exposed by the confident tone in which he had talked of the amiable dispositions of the Castilian court, and by the credit he had taken to himself for promoting them.⁴

A greater sensation was produced among the people; for their expectations had been far more sanguine than those entertained by William, and the few who, like him, understood the character of Philip too well to place great confidence in the promises of Egmont. They loudly declaimed against the king's insincerity, and accused their envoy of having shown more concern for his private interests than for those of the public. This taunt touched the honor of that nobleman, who bitterly complained that it was an artifice of Philip to destroy his credit with his countrymen; and the better to prove his good faith, he avowed his purpose of throwing up at once all the offices he held under government.⁵

The spirit of persecution, after a temporary lull, now again awakened. But everywhere the inquisitors were exposed to insult, and met with the same resistance as before; while their victims were cheered with expres-

² *Ibid.*, ubi supra.—Strada, *De Bello Belgico*, tom. I. p. 187.

³ *Correspondance de Philippe II.*, tom. I. p. 347.

⁴ Vandervynckt, *Troubles des Pays-Bas*, tom. II. p. 92.

⁵ *Correspondance de Philippe II.*, tom. I. p. 364.

sions of sympathy from those who saw them led to execution. To avoid the contagion of example, the executions were now conducted secretly in the prisons.⁶ But the mystery thus thrown around the fate of the unhappy sufferer only invested it with an additional horror. Complaints were made every day to the government by the states, the magistrates, and the people, denouncing the persecutions to which they were exposed. Spies, they said, were in every house, watching looks, words, gestures. No man was secure, either in person or property. The public groaned under an intolerable slavery.⁷ Meanwhile, the Huguenot emissaries were busy as ever in propagating their doctrines; and with the work of reform was mingled the seed of revolution.

The regent felt the danger of this state of things, and her impotence to relieve it. She did all she could in freely exposing it to Philip, informing him at the same time of Egmont's disgust, and the general discontent of the nation, at the instructions from Spain. She ended, as usual, by beseeching her brother to come himself, if he would preserve his authority in the Netherlands.⁸ To these communications the royal answers came but rarely; and, when they did come, were for the most part vague and unsatisfactory.

"Everything goes on with Philip," writes Chantonnay, formerly minister to France, to his brother Granvelle,—
"Everything goes on from to-morrow to to-morrow;

⁶ "And everywhere great endeavors were used to deliver the imprisoned, as soon as it was known how they were privately made away in the prisons: for the inquisitors not daring any longer to carry them to a public execution, this new method of despatching them, which the king himself had ordered, was now put in practice, and it was commonly per-

formed thus: They bound the condemned person neck and heels, then threw him into a tub of water, where he lay till he was quite suffocated." Brandt, *Reformation in the Low Countries*, vol. I. p. 155.

⁷ *Ibid.*, tom. I. p. 154.

⁸ *Correspondance de Philippe II.*, tom. I. p. 361 et alibi.

the only resolution is, to remain irresolute.⁹ The king will allow matters to become so entangled in the Low Countries, that, if he ever should visit them, he will find it easier to conform to the state of things than to mend it. The lords there are more of kings than the king himself.¹⁰ They have all the smaller nobles in leading-strings. It is impossible that Philip should conduct himself like a man.¹¹ His only object is to cajole the Flemish nobles, so that he may be spared the necessity of coming to Flanders."

"It is a pity," writes the secretary Perez, "that the king will manage affairs as he does, now taking counsel of this man, and now of that; concealing some matters from those he consults, and trusting them with others, showing full confidence in no one. With this way of proceeding, it is no wonder that despatches should be contradictory in their tenor."¹²

It is doubtless true, that procrastination and distrust were the besetting sins of Philip, and were followed by their natural consequences. He had, moreover, as we have seen, a sluggishness of nature, which kept him in Madrid when he should have been in Brussels,—where his father, in similar circumstances, would long since have been, seeing with his own eyes what Philip saw only with the eyes of others. But still his policy, in the present instance, may be referred quite as much to deliberate calculation as to his natural temper. He had early settled it as a fixed principle never to concede religious toleration to his subjects. He had intimated

⁹ "Tout vat de demain à demain, et la principale résolution en telles choses est de demeurer perpétuellement irrésolu." Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, tom. I. p. 426.

¹⁰ "Il y en a qui sont plus Roys

que le Roy." Ibid., ubi supra.

¹¹ "Le Roi aura bien de la peine à se montrer homme." Ibid., ubi supra.

¹² Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. I. p. 358.

this pretty clearly in his different communications to the government of Flanders. That he did not announce it in a more absolute and unequivocal form may well have arisen from the apprehension, that, in the present irritable state of the people, this might rouse their passions into a flame. At least, it might be reserved for a last resort. Meanwhile, he hoped to weary them out by maintaining an attitude of cold reserve; until, convinced of the hopelessness of resistance, they would cease altogether to resist. In short, he seemed to deal with the Netherlands like a patient angler, who allows the trout to exhaust himself by his own efforts, rather than by a violent movement risk the loss of him altogether. It is clear Philip did not understand the character of the Netherlander,—as dogged and determined as his own.

Considering the natural bent of the king's disposition, there seems no reason to charge Granvelle, as was commonly done in the Low Countries, with having given a direction to his policy. It is, however, certain, that, on all great questions, the minister's judgment seems to have perfectly coincided with that of his master. "If your majesty mitigates the edicts," writes the cardinal, "affairs will become worse in Flanders than they are in France."¹³ No change should be allowed in the council of state.¹⁴ A meeting of the states-general would inflict an injury which the king would feel for thirty years to come!¹⁵ Granvelle maintained a busy correspondence with his partisans in the Low Countries, and sent the results of it—frequently the original letters themselves—to Madrid. Thus Philip, by means of the reports of the

¹³ "Le Roi peut être certain que, s'il accorde que les édits ne s'exécutent pas, jamais plus le peuple ne souffrira qu'on châtie les hérétiques; et les choses iront ainsi aux Pays-Bas beaucoup plus mal qu'en France."

Correspondance de Philippe II, tom. I. p. 323.

¹⁴ Ibid., tom. I. p. 371.

¹⁵ Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, tom. I. p. 246.

great nobles on the one hand, and of the Cardinalists on the other, was enabled to observe the movements in Flanders from the most opposite points of view.

The king's replies to the letters of the minister were somewhat scanty, to judge from the complaints which Granvelle made of his neglect. With all this, the cardinal professes to be well pleased that he is rid of so burdensome an office as that of governing the Netherlands. "Here," he writes to his friend Viglius, "I make good cheer, busying myself with my own affairs, and preparing my despatches in quiet, seldom leaving the house, except to take a walk, to attend church, or to visit my mother."¹⁶ In this simple way of life, the philosophic statesman seems to have passed his time to his own satisfaction, though it is evident, notwithstanding his professions, that he cast many a longing look back to the Netherlands, the seat of his brief authority. "The hatred the people of Flanders bear me," he writes to Philip, "afflicts me sorely; but I console myself that it is for the service of God and my king."¹⁷ The cardinal, amid his complaints of the king's neglect, affected the most entire submission to his will. "I would go anywhere," he writes,— "to the Indies, anywhere in the world,— would even throw myself into the fire, did you desire it."¹⁸ Philip, not long after, put these professions to the test. In October, 1565, he yielded to the regent's importunities, and commanded Granvelle to transfer his residence to Rome. The cardinal would not move. "Anywhere,"

¹⁶ "Entendant seulement à mez affaires, ne bougeant de ma chambre synon pour proumener, à faire exercice à l'église, et vers Madame, et faisant mes dépesches où je doibtz correspondre, sans bruyct." Papiers d'Etat de Granvelle, tom. IX. p. 639.

¹⁷ Correspondence de Philippe II.,

tom. I. p. 326.

¹⁸ "Il lui suffit, pour se contenter d'être ou il est, de savoir que c'est la volonté du Roi, et cela lui suffira pour aller aux Indes, ou en quelque autre lieu que ce soit, et même pour se jeter dans le feu." Ibid., p. 301.

he wrote to his master, "but to Rome. That is a place of ceremonies and empty show, for which I am nowise qualified. Besides, it would look too much like a submission on your part. My diocese of Mechlin has need of me; now, if I should go to Spain, it would look as if I went to procure the aid which it so much requires."¹⁹ But the cabinet of Madrid were far from desiring the presence of so cunning a statesman to direct the royal counsels. The orders were reiterated, to go to Rome. To Rome, accordingly, the reluctant minister went; and we have a letter from him to the king, dated from that capital, the first of February, 1566, in which he counsels his master by no means to think of introducing the Spanish Inquisition into the Netherlands.²⁰ It might seem as if, contrary to the proverb, change of climate had wrought some change in the disposition of the cardinal.—From this period, Granvelle, so long the terror of the Low Countries, disappears from the management of their affairs. He does not, however, disappear from the political theatre. We shall again meet with the able and ambitious prelate, first as viceroy of Naples, and afterwards at Madrid occupying the highest station in the councils of his sovereign.

Early in July, 1565, the commission of reform appointed by Philip transmitted its report to Spain. It recommended no change in the present laws, except so far as to authorize the judges to take into consideration the age and sex of the accused, and in case of penitence to commute the capital punishment of the convicted heretic for banishment. Philip approved of the report in all particulars,—except the only particular that involved a change, that of mercy to the penitent heretic.²¹

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 380.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 372.—Hopper, *Recueil*

²⁰ *Correspondance de Philippe II.*, et *Mémorial*, p. 57.
tom. I. p. 396.

At length, the king resolved on such an absolute declaration of his will as should put all doubts on the matter at rest, and relieve him from further importunity. On the seventeenth of October, 1565, he addressed that memorable letter to his sister, from the Wood of Segovia, which may be said to have determined the fate of the Netherlands. Philip, in this, intimates his surprise that his letters should appear to Egmont inconsistent with what he had heard from his lips at Madrid. His desire was not for novelty in anything. He would have the Inquisition conducted by the inquisitors, as it had hitherto been, and as by right, divine and human, belonged to them.²² For the edicts, it was no time in the present state of religion to make any change; both his own and those of his father must be executed. The Anabaptists—a sect for which, as the especial butt of persecution, much intercession had been made—must be dealt with according to the rigor of the law. Philip concluded by conjuring the regent and the lords in the council faithfully to obey his commands, as in so doing they would render the greatest service to the cause of religion and of their country,—which last, he adds, without the execution of these ordinances, would be of little worth.²³

In a private letter to the regent of nearly the same date with these public despatches, Philip speaks of the proposed changes in the council of state as a subject on which he had not made up his mind.²⁴ He notices also

²² Car, quant à l'inquisition, mon intention est qu'elle se face par les inquisiteurs, comm'elle s'est faicte jusques à maintenant, et comm'il leur appartient par droitz divins et humains." Correspondance de Philippe II., tom I., "Rapport," p. cxxix, note.

²³ Ibid., ubi supra.

²⁴ This letter was dated the twentieth of October. All hesitation seems to have vanished in a letter addressed to Granvelle only two days after, in which Philip says, "As to the proposed changes in the government, there is not a question about them." "Quant aux changements qu'on lui a écrit devoir se

the proposed convocation of the states-general as a thing, in the present disorders of the country, altogether inexpedient.²⁵—Thus the king's despatches covered nearly all the debatable ground on which the contest had been so long going on between the crown and the country. There could be no longer any complaint of ambiguity or reserve in the expression of the royal will. "God knows," writes Viglius, "what wry faces were made in the council on learning the absolute will of his majesty!"²⁶ There was not one of its members, not even the president or Barlaimont, who did not feel the necessity of bending to the tempest so far as to suspend, if not to mitigate, the rigor of the law. They looked to the future with gloomy apprehension. Viglius strongly urged, that the despatches should not be made public till some further communication should be had with Philip to warn him of the consequences. In this he was opposed by the prince of Orange. "It was too late," he said, "to talk of what was expedient to be done. Since the will of his majesty was so unequivocally expressed, all that remained for the government was to execute it."²⁷ In vain did Viglius offer to take the whole responsibility of the delay on himself. William's opinion, supported by Egmont and Hoorne, prevailed with the regent, too timid, by such an act of disobedience, to hazard the displeasure of her brother. As, late in the evening, the council broke up, William was heard to exclaim, "Now we shall see the beginning of a fine tragedy!"²⁸

faire dans le gouvernement, il n'en est pas question." *Correspondance de Philippe II.*, tom. I. p. 375.

²⁵ *Documentos Inéditos*, tom. IV. p. 333.

²⁶ "Dieu sçait qué visaiges ils ont monstrez, et qué mescontentement ils ont, voyans l'absolute volonté du Roy." *Archives de la Mai-*

son d'Orange-Nassau, tom. I. p. 442.

²⁷ Hopper, *Recueil et Mémorial*, p. 59.

²⁸ "Quâ conclusione acceptâ, Princeps Auriacensis cuidam in aurem dixit (qui post id retulit) quasi lætus gloriabundusque: visuros nos brevi egregiæ tragediæ initium." *Vita Viglii*, p. 45.

In the month of December, the regent caused copies of the despatches, with extracts from the letters to herself, to be sent to the governors and the councils of the several provinces, with orders that they should see to their faithful execution. Officers, moreover, were to be appointed, whose duty it was to ascertain the manner in which these orders were fulfilled, and to report thereon to the government.

The result was what had been foreseen. The publication of the despatches—to borrow the words of a Flemish writer—created a sensation throughout the country little short of what would have been caused by a declaration of war.²⁹ Under every discouragement, men had flattered themselves, up to this period, with the expectation of some change for the better. The constantly increasing number of the Reformers, the persevering resistance to the Inquisition, the reiterated remonstrances to the government, the general persuasion that the great nobles, even the regent, were on their side, had all combined to foster the hope that toleration, to some extent, would eventually be conceded by Philip.³⁰ This hope was now crushed. Whatever doubts had been entertained were dispelled by these last despatches, which came like a hurricane, sweeping away the mists that had so long

²⁹ "Une déclaration de guerre n'aurait pas fait plus d'impression sur les esprits, que ces dépêches, quand la connaissance en parvint au public." Vandervynckt, *Troubles des Pays-Bas*, tom. II. p. 94.

³⁰ "Se comienza á dar esperanza al pueblo de la libertad de conciencia, de las mudanzas del gobierno." Renom de Francia, *Alborotos de Flandes*, MS.

"Some demand a mitigation of the edicts; others," as Viglius peevishly complains to Granvelle, "say that they want at least as much

toleration as is vouchsafed to Christians by the Turks, who do not persecute the enemies of their faith as we persecute brethren of our own faith, for a mere difference in the interpretation of Scripture!" (*Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau*, tom. I. p. 287.) Viglius was doubtless of the opinion of M. Gerlache, that for Philip to have granted toleration would have proved the signal for a general massacre. Vide *Hist. du Royaume des Pays-Bas*, tom. I. p. 83.

blinded the eyes of men, and laying open the policy of the crown, clear as day, to the dullest apprehension. The people passed to the extremity of despair. The Spanish Inquisition, with its train of horrors, seemed to be already in the midst of them. They called to mind all the tales of woe they had heard of it. They recounted the atrocities perpetrated by the Spaniards in the New World, which, however erroneously, they charged on the Holy Office. "Do they expect," they cried, "that we shall tamely wait here, like the wretched Indians, to be slaughtered by millions?"³¹ Men were seen gathering into knots, in the streets and public squares, discussing the conduct of the government, and gloomily talking of secret associations and foreign alliances. Meetings were stealthily held in the woods, and in the suburbs of the great towns, where the audience listened to fanatical preachers, who, while discussing the doctrines of religious reform, darkly hinted at resistance. Tracts were printed, and widely circulated, in which the reciprocal obligations of lord and vassal were treated, and the right of resistance was maintained; and, in some instances, these difficult questions were handled with decided ability. A more common form was that of satire and scurrilous lampoon,—a favourite weapon with the early Reformers. Their satirical sallies were levelled indifferently at the throne and the Church. The bishops were an obvious mark. No one was spared. Comedies were written to ridicule the clergy. Never since the discovery of the art of printing—more than a century before—had the press been turned into an engine of such political importance as in the earlier stages of the revolution in the Nether-

³¹ "On défait les Espagnols de trouver aux Pays-Bas ces stupides Américains et ces misérables habitants du Pérou, qu'on avait égorgés

par millions, quand on avait vu qu'ils ne savaient pas se défendre." Vandervynckt, *Troubles des Pays-Bas*, tom. I. p. 97.

lands. Thousands of the seditious pamphlets thus thrown off were rapidly circulated among a people, the humblest of whom possessed what many a noble in other lands, at that day, was little skilled in,—the art of reading. Placards were nailed to the doors of the magistrates, in some of the cities, proclaiming that Rome stood in need of her Brutus. Others were attached to the gates of Orange and Egmont, calling on them to come forth and save their country.³²

Margaret was filled with alarm at these signs of disaffection throughout the land. She felt the ground trembling beneath her. She wrote again and again to Philip, giving full particulars of the state of the public sentiment, and the seditious spirit which seemed on the verge of insurrection. She intimated her wish to resign the government.³³ She besought him to allow the states-general to be summoned, and, at all events, to come in person and take the reins from her hands, too weak to hold them.—Philip coolly replied, that “he was sorry the despatches from Segovia had given such offence. They had been designed only for the service of God and the good of the country.”³⁴

In this general fermentation, a new class of men came on the stage, important by their numbers, though they had taken no part as yet in political affairs. These were the lower nobility of the country; men of honorable descent, and many of them allied by blood or marriage with the highest nobles of the land. They were too often men of dilapidated fortunes, fallen into decay through

³² See a letter of Morillon to Granvelle, January 27, 1566, Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, Supplément, p. 22.

³³ Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. I. p. 390.

³⁴ “Il a appris avec peine que le

contenu de sa lettre, datée du bois de Ségovie, a été mal accueilli aux Pays-Bas, ses intentions ne tendant qu'au service de Dieu et au bien de ces Etats, comme l'amour qu'il leur porte l'y oblige.” Ibid., p. 400.

their own prodigality, or that of their progenitors. Many had received their education abroad, some in Geneva, the home of Calvin, where they naturally imbibed the doctrines of the great Reformer. In needy circumstances, with no better possession than the inheritance of honorable traditions, or the memory of better days, they were urged by a craving, impatient spirit, which naturally made them prefer any change to the existing order of things. They were, for the most part, bred to arms; and, in the days of Charles the Fifth, had found an ample career opened to their ambition under the imperial banners. But Philip, with less policy than his father, had neglected to court this class of his subjects, who, without fixed principles or settled motives of action, seemed to float on the surface of events, prepared to throw their weight, at any moment, into the scale of revolution.

Some twenty of these cavaliers, for the most part young men, met together in the month of November, in Brussels, at the house of Count Culemborg, a nobleman attached to the Protestant opinions. Their avowed purpose was to listen to the teachings of a Flemish divine, named Junius, a man of parts and learning, who had been educated in the school of Calvin, and who, having returned to the Netherlands, exercised, under the very eye of the regent, the dangerous calling of the missionary. At this meeting of the discontented nobles, the talk naturally turned on the evils of the land, and the best means of remedying them. The result of the conferences was the formation of a league, the principal objects of which are elaborately set forth in a paper known as the "Compromise."³⁵

³⁵ Historians have usually referred the origin of the "Union" to a meeting of nine nobles at Breda, as

reported by Strada. (De Bello Belgico, tom. I. p. 208.) But we have the testimony of Junius himself to

This celebrated document declares that the king had been induced by evil counsellors,—for the most part foreigners,—in violation of his oath, to establish the Inquisition in the country; a tribunal opposed to all law, divine and human, surpassing in barbarity anything ever yet practised by tyrants,³⁶ tending to bring the land to utter ruin, and the inhabitants to a state of miserable bondage. The confederates, therefore, in order not to become the prey of those who, under the name of religion, seek only to enrich themselves at the expense of life and property,³⁷ bind themselves by a solemn oath to resist the establishment of the Inquisition, under whatever form it may be introduced, and to protect each other against it with their lives and fortunes. In doing this, they protest that, so far from intending anything to the dishonor of the king, their only intent is to maintain the king in his estate, and to preserve the tranquillity of the realm. They conclude with solemnly invoking the blessing of the Almighty on this their lawful and holy confederation.

Such are some of the principal points urged in this remarkable instrument, in which little mention is made of the edicts, every other grievance being swallowed up in that of the detested Inquisition. Indeed, the translations

the fact, as stated in the text; and this testimony is accepted by Groen, who treads with a caution that secures him a good footing even in the slippery places of history. (See Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, tom. II. p. 2.) Brandt also adopts the report of Junius. (Reformation in the Low Countries, tom. I. p. 162.)

³⁶ "Inique et contraire à toutes loix divines et humaines, surpassant la plus grande barbarie que oncques fut practiquée entre les tirans." Archives de la Maison d'Orange-

Nassau, tom. II. p. 3.

One might imagine that the confederates intended in the first part of this sentence to throw the words of Philip back upon himself,—*"Comme il leur appartient par droit divin et humains."* Dépêche du Bois de Ségovie, October 17, 1565.

³⁷ "Affin de n'estre exposéz en proye à ceulx qui, soubz ombre de religion, voudroient s'enrichir aux despens de nostre sang et de nos biens." Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, tom. II. p. 4.

of the "Compromise," which soon appeared, in various languages, usually bore the title of "League of the Nobles of Flanders against the Spanish Inquisition."³⁸

It will hardly be denied that those who signed this instrument had already made a decided move in the game of rebellion. They openly arrayed themselves against the execution of the law and the authority of the crown. They charged the king with having violated his oath, and they accused him of abetting a persecution which, under the pretext of religion, had no other object than the spoil of its victims. It was of little moment that all this was done under professions of loyalty. Such professions are the decent cover with which the first approaches are always made in a revolution.—The copies of the instrument differ somewhat from each other. One of these, before me, as if to give the edge of personal insult to their remonstrance, classes in the same category "the vagabond, the priest, and the *Spaniard*."³⁹

Among the small company who first subscribed the document, we find names that rose to eminence in the stormy scenes of the revolution. There was Count Louis of Nassau, a younger brother of the prince of Orange, the "*bon chevalier*," as William used to call him,—a title well earned by his generous spirit and many noble and humane qualities. Louis was bred a Lutheran, and was zealously devoted to the cause of reform, when his brother took but a comparatively languid interest in it. His ardent, precipitate temper was often kept in check, and more wisely directed, by the prudent counsels of William; while he amply repaid his brother by his devoted attachment, and by the zeal and intrepidity with which he

³⁸ Vandervynckt, *Troubles des Pays-Bas*, tom. II. p. 134.

³⁹ "De sorte que si un Prestre, un Espagnol, ou quelque mauvais garnement veut mal, ou nuyre à

autrui, par le moyen de l'Inquisition, il pourra l'accuser, faire apprehender, voire faire mourir, soit à droit, soit à tort." *Supplément à Strada*, tom. II. p. 300.

carried out his plans. Louis, indeed, might be called the right hand of William.

Another of the party was Philip de Marnix, lord of St. Aldegonde. He was the intimate friend of William of Orange. In the words of a Belgian writer, he was one of the beautiful characters of the time;⁴⁰ distinguished alike as a soldier, a statesman, and a scholar. It is to his pen that the composition of the "Compromise" has generally been assigned. Some critics have found its tone inconsistent with the sedate and tranquil character of his mind. Yet St. Aldegonde's device, "*Repos ailleurs,*"⁴¹ would seem to indicate a fervid imagination and an impatient spirit of activity.

But the man who seems to have entered most heartily into these first movements of the revolution was Henry, viscount of Brederode. He sprung from an ancient line, boasting his descent from the counts of Holland. The only possession that remained to him, the lordship of Viana, he still claimed to hold as independent of the king of Spain, or any other potentate. His patrimony had been wasted in a course of careless indulgence, and little else was left than barren titles and pretensions,—which, it must be owned, he was not diffident in vaunting. He was fond of convivial pleasures, and had a free, reckless humor, that took with the people, to whom he was still more endeared by his sturdy hatred of oppression. Brederode was, in short, one of those busy, vaporing characters, who make themselves felt at the outset of a revolution, but are soon lost in the course of it; like those ominous birds which with their cries and screams herald in the tempest that soon sweeps them out of sight for ever.

⁴⁰ "L'un des beaux caractères de ce temps." Borguet, Philippe

II. et la Belgique, p. 43.

⁴¹ Ibid., ubi supra.

Copies of the "Compromise," with the names attached to it, were soon distributed through all parts of the country, and eagerly signed by great numbers, not merely of the petty nobility and gentry, but of substantial burghers and wealthy merchants, men who had large interests at stake in the community. Hames, king-at-arms of the Golden Fleece, who was a zealous confederate, boasted that the names of two thousand such persons were on his paper.⁴² Among them were many Roman Catholics; and we are again called to notice, that in the outset this Protestant revolution received important support from the Catholics themselves, who forgot all religious differences in a common hatred of arbitrary power.

Few, if any, of the great nobles seem to have been among the number of those who signed the "Compromise,"—certainly none of the council of state. It would hardly have done to invite one of the royal councillors—in other words, one of the government—to join the confederacy, when they would have been bound by the obligations of their office to disclose it to the regent. But if the great lords did not become actual parties to the league, they showed their sympathy with the object of it, by declining to enforce the execution of the laws against which it was directed. On the twenty-fourth of January, 1566, the prince of Orange addressed, from Breda, a letter to the regent, on the occasion of her sending him the despatches from Segovia, for the rule of his government in the provinces. In this remarkable letter, William exposes, with greater freedom than he was wont, his reasons for refusing to comply with the royal orders. "I express myself freely and frankly," he says, "on a topic on which I have not been consulted ;

⁴² Strada, De Bello Belgico, tom. I. p. 209.

but I do so, lest by my silence I may incur the responsibility of the mischief that must ensue." He then briefly, and in a decided tone, touches on the evils of the Inquisition,—introduced, as he says, contrary to the repeated pledges of the king,—and on the edicts. Great indulgence had been of late shown in the interpretation of these latter; and to revive them on a sudden, so as to execute them with their ancient rigor, would be most disastrous. There could not be a worse time than the present, when the people were sorely pressed by scarcity of food, and in a critical state from the religious agitations on their borders. It might cost the king his empire in the Netherlands, and throw it into the hands of his neighbors.⁴³

"For my own part," he concludes, "if his majesty insists on the execution of these measures, rather than incur the stain which must rest on me and my house by attempting it, I will resign my office into the hands of some one better acquainted with the humors of the people, and who will be better able to maintain order in the country."⁴⁴

In the same tone several of the other provincial governors replied to Margaret, declaring that they could never coolly stand by and see fifty or sixty thousand of their countrymen burned to death for errors of religion.⁴⁵ The regent was sorely perplexed by this desertion of

⁴³ "Mettant le tout en hazard de venir ès mains de nos voisins" Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciturne, tom. II. p. 109.

⁴⁴ "J'aimerois mieulx, en cas que Sadiete Majesté ne le veuille dilaier jusques à là, et dès à présent persiste sur cette inquisition et exécution, qu'elle commisse quelque autre en ma place, mieulx entendant les humeurs du peuple, et plus habile que moi à les maintenir en paix et repos,

plustost que d'encourir la note dont moi et les miens porrions estre souillés, si quelque inconvenient advint au pays de mon gouvernement, et durant ma charge." *Ibid.*, ubi supra.

⁴⁵ "Addidere aliqui, nolle se in id operam conferre, ut quinquaginta aut sexaginta hominum millia, se Provincias administrantibus, igni concrementur." Strada, *De Bello Belgico*, tom. I. p. 203.

the men on whom she most relied. She wrote to them in a strain of expostulation, and besought the prince, in particular, not to add to the troubles of the time, by abandoning his post, where the attachment of the people gave him such unbounded influence.⁴⁶

The agitations of the country, in the mean time, continued to increase. There was a scarcity of bread,—so often the forerunner of revolution,—and this article had risen to an enormous price. The people were menaced with famine, which might have led to serious consequences, but for a temporary relief from Spain.⁴⁷

Rumors now began to be widely circulated of the speedy coming of Philip, with a large army, to chastise his vassals; and the rumors gained easy credit with those who felt they were already within the pale of rebellion. Duke Eric of Brunswick was making numerous levies on the German borders, and it was generally believed that their destination was Flanders. It was in vain that Margaret, who ascertained the falsehood of the report, endeavored to undeceive the people.⁴⁸

A short time previously, in the month of June, an interview had taken place, at Bayonne, between the queen-mother, Catherine de Medicis, and her daughter, Isabella of Spain. Instead of her husband, Isabella was accompanied at this interview by the counsellor in whom he most trusted, the duke of Alva. The two queens were each attended by a splendid retinue of nobles. The meeting was prolonged for several days, amidst a succession of balls, tourneys, and magnificent banquets, at which the costly dress and equipage of the French nobility contrasted strangely enough with the no less

⁴⁶ Correspondance de Guillaume II., tom. I. p. 378.
le Taciturne, tom. II. p. 112.

⁴⁸ Archives de la Maison d'Orange-

⁴⁷ Correspondance de Philippe Nassau, tom. II. p. 33.

ostentatious simplicity of the Spaniards. This simplicity, so contrary to the usual pomp of the Castilian, was in obedience to the orders of Philip, who, foreseeing the national emulation, forbade the indulgence of it at a foolish cost, which in the end was severely felt by the shattered finances of France.

Amid the brilliant pageants which occupied the public eye, secret conferences were daily carried on between Catherine and the duke of Alva. The results were never published, but enough found its way into the light to show that the principal object was the extermination of heresy in France and the Netherlands. The queen-mother was for milder measures,—though slower not less sure. But the iron-hearted duke insisted that to grant liberty of conscience was to grant unbounded licence. The only way to exterminate the evil was by fire and sword! It was on this occasion that, when Catherine suggested that it was easier to deal with the refractory commons than with the nobles, Alva replied, "True, but ten thousand frogs are not worth the head of a single salmon,"⁴⁹—an ominous simile, which was afterwards remembered against its author, when he ruled over the Netherlands.⁵⁰

The report of these dark conferences had reached the Low Countries, where it was universally believed that

⁴⁹ "A ce propos le duc d'Albe répondit que dix mille grenouilles ne valaient pas la tête d'un saumon." Sismondi, *Hist. des Français*, tom. XVIII. p. 447.

Davila, in telling the same story, reports the saying of the duke in somewhat different words:—"Diceva che . . . bisognava pescare i pesci grossi, e non si curare di prendere le ranocchie." *Guerre Civili di Francia*, (Milano, 1807,) tom. I. p. 341.

⁵⁰ Henry the Fourth, when a boy of eleven years of age, was in the train of Catherine, and was present

at one of her interviews with Alva. It is said that he overheard the words of the duke quoted in the text, and that they sank deep into the mind of the future champion of Protestantism. Henry reported them to his mother, Jeanne d'Albret, by whom they were soon made public. Sismondi, *Hist. des Français*, tom. XVIII. p. 447.—For the preceding paragraph see also De Thou, *Hist. Universelle*, tom. V. p. 34 et seq.—Cabrera, *Filipe Segundo*, lib. VI. cap. 23.—Brantôme, *Œuvres*, tom. V. p. 58 et seq.

the object of them was to secure the coöperation of France in crushing the liberties of Flanders.⁵¹

In the panic thus spread throughout the country, the more timid or prudent, especially of those who dwelt in the seaports, began to take measures for avoiding these evils by emigration. They sought refuge in Protestant states, and especially in England, where no less than thirty thousand, we are told by a contemporary, took shelter under the sceptre of Elizabeth.⁵² They swarmed in the cities of London and Sandwich, and the politic queen assigned them also the seaport of Norwich as their residence. Thus Flemish industry was transferred to English soil. The course of trade between the two nations now underwent a change. The silk and woollen stuffs, which had formerly been sent from Flanders to England, became the staple of a large export-trade from

⁵¹ It is a common opinion that, at the meeting at Bayonne, it was arranged between the queen-mother and Alva to revive the tragedy of the Sicilian Vespers in the horrid massacre of St. Bartholomew. I find, however, no warrant for such an opinion in the letters of either the duke or Don Juan Manrique de Lara, major-domo to Queen Isabella, the originals of which are still preserved in the Royal Library at Paris. In my copy of these MSS. the letters of Alva to Philip the Second cover much the larger space. They are very minute in their account of his conversation with the queen-mother. His great object seems to have been, to persuade her to abandon her temporizing policy, and, instead of endeavoring to hold the balance between the contending parties, to assert, in the most uncompromising manner, the supremacy of the Roman Catholics. He endeavored to fortify her in this course by the example of his own master, the king of Spain, repeating

Philip's declaration, so often quoted, under various forms, that "he would surrender his kingdom, nay life itself, rather than reign over heretics."

While the duke earnestly endeavored to overcome the arguments of Catherine de Medicis in favor of a milder, more rational, and, it may be added, more politic course in reference to the Huguenots, he cannot justly be charged with having directly recommended those atrocious measures which have branded her name with infamy. Yet, on the other hand, it cannot be denied that this bloody catastrophe was a legitimate result of the policy which he advised.

⁵² "On voit journellement gens de ce pays aller en Angleterre, avec leurs familles et leurs instruments; et jà Londres, Zandvich et le pays allenviron est si plain, que l'on dit que le nombre surpasse 30,000 testes." Assonleville to Granville, January 15, 1565, Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. I. p. 392.

England to Flanders. "The Low Countries," writes the correspondent of Granvelle, "are the Indies of the English, who make war on our purses, as the French, some years since, made war on our towns."⁵³

Some of the Flemish provinces, instead of giving way to despondency, appealed sturdily to their charters, to rescue them from the arbitrary measures of the crown. The principal towns of Brabant, with Antwerp at their head, intrenched themselves behind their *Joyeuse Entrée*. The question was brought before the council; a decree was given in favor of the applicants, and ratified by the regent; and the free soil of Brabant was no longer polluted by the presence of the Inquisition.⁵⁴

The gloom now became deeper round the throne of the regent. Of all in the Netherlands, the person least to be envied was the one who ruled over them. Weaned from her attachment to Granvelle by the influence of the lords, Margaret now found herself compelled to resume the arbitrary policy which she disapproved, and to forfeit the support of the very party to which of late she had given all her confidence. The lords in the council withdrew from her, the magistrates in the provinces thwarted her, and large masses of the population were arrayed in actual resistance against the government. It may seem strange that it was not till the spring of 1566 that she received positive tidings of the existence of the league, when she was informed of it by Egmont, and some others of the council of state.⁵⁵ As usual, the rumor went beyond the truth. Twenty or thirty thousand men were said to be in arms, and half that

⁵³ "Il y a longtemps que ces Pays-Bas sont les Indes d'Angleterre, et, tant qu'ilz les auront, ilz n'en ont besoing d'aultres." Ibid., p. 382.

⁵⁴ Meteren, Hist. des Pays-Bas,

tom. I. fol. 39, 40.—Correspondance de Marguerite d'Autriche, p. 17.

⁵⁵ Supplément à Strada, tom. II. p. 293.

number to be prepared to march on Brussels, and seize the person of the regent, unless she complied with their demands.⁵⁶

For a moment Margaret thought of taking refuge in the citadel. But she soon rallied, and showed the spirit to have been expected in the daughter of Charles the Fifth. She ordered the garrisons to be strengthened in the fortresses throughout the country. She summoned the companies of *ordonnance* to the capital, and caused them to renew their oaths of fidelity to the king. She wrote to the Spanish ministers at the neighboring courts, informed them of the league, and warned them to allow no aid to be sent to it from the countries where they resided. Finally, she called a meeting of the knights of the Golden Fleece and the council of state, for the twenty-seventh of March, to deliberate on the perilous situation of the country. Having completed these arrangements, the duchess wrote to her brother, informing him exactly of the condition of things, and suggesting what seemed to her counsellors the most effectual remedy. She wrote the more freely, as her love of power had yielded to a sincere desire to extricate herself from the trials and troubles which attended it.⁵⁷

There were but two courses, she said, force or concession.⁵⁸ The former, to say nothing of the ruin it would bring on the land, was rendered difficult by want of money to pay the troops, and by the want of trustworthy officers to command them. Concessions must consist in abolishing the Inquisition,—a useless tribunal where sectaries swarmed openly in the cities,—in modi-

⁵⁶ Ibid., ubi supra.—Strada, De Bello Belgico, tom. I. p. 212.

⁵⁷ Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. I. p. 402.—Strada, De Bello Belgico, tom. I. p. 212.—Correspon-

dance de Guillaume le Taciturne, tom. II. p. 132.

⁵⁸ Supplément à Strada, tom. II. p. 294.

fyng the edicts, and in granting a free pardon to all who had signed the Compromise, provided they would return to their duty.⁵⁹ On these terms, the lords of the council were willing to guaranty the obedience of the people. At all events, they promised Margaret their support in enforcing it. She would not express her own preference for either of the alternatives presented to Philip; but would faithfully execute his commands, whatever they might be, to the best of her ability.— Without directly expressing her preference, it was pretty clear on which side it lay. Margaret concluded by earnestly beseeching her brother to return an immediate answer to her despatches by the courier who bore them.

The person who seems to have enjoyed the largest share of Margaret's confidence, at this time, was Egmont. He remained at Brussels, and still kept his seat in council after William had withdrawn to his estates in Breda. Yet the prince, although he had left Brussels in disgust, had not taken part with the confederates; much less—as was falsely rumored, and to his great annoyance—put himself at their head.⁶⁰ His brother, it is true, and some of his particular friends, had joined the league. But Louis declares that he did so without the knowledge of William. When the latter, a fortnight afterwards, learned the existence of the league, he expressed his entire disapprobation of it.⁶¹ He even used

⁵⁹ "Ostant l'Inquisition, qui en ce temps est tant odieuse . . . et ne sert quasi de riens, pour estre les Sectaires assez cognuz; moderant quant et quant la rigueur des Placcarts . . . publiant aussy quant et quant pardon general pour ceulx qui se sont meslez de laditte Ligue." *Ibid.*, p. 295.

⁶⁰ "Le Prince d'Oranges et le Comte de Hornes disoyent en plain conseil qu'ils estoyent d'intention de

se vouloir retirer en leurs maisons, . . . se deuilans mesmes le dit Prince, que l'on le tenoit pour suspect et pour chief de ceste Confédération." Extract from the Procès d'Egmont, in the Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, tom. II. p. 42.

⁶¹ "De laquelle estant advertis quelques quinze jours après, devant que les confédérés se trouvassent en court, nous déclarames ouvertement

his authority, we are told, to prevent the confederates from resorting to some violent measures, among others the seizure of Antwerp, promising that he would aid them to accomplish their ends in a more orderly way.⁶² What he desired was, to have the states-general called together by the king. But he would not assume a hostile attitude, like that of the confederates, to force him into this unpalatable measure.⁶³ When convened, he would have had the legislature, without transcending its constitutional limits, remonstrate, and lay the grievances of the nation before the throne.

This temperate mode of proceeding did not suit the hot blood of the younger confederates. "Your brother," writes Hames to Louis, "is too slow and lukewarm. He would have us employ only remonstrance against these hungry wolves; against enemies who do nothing in return but behead, and banish, and burn us. We are to do the talking, and they the acting. We must fight with the pen, while they fight with the sword."⁶⁴

The truth was, that William was not possessed of the

et rondement qu'elle ne nous plaisoit pas, et que ce ne nous sambloit estre le vray moyen pour maintenir le repos et tranquillité publique." Extract from the "Justification" of William, (1567,) in the Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, tom. II., p. 11.

⁶² This fact rests on the authority of a MS. ascribed to Junius. (Brandt, Reformation in the Low Countries, vol. I. p. 162.) Groen, however, distrusts the authenticity of this MS. (Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, tom. II. p. 12.) Yet, whatever may be thought of the expedition against Antwerp, it appears from William's own statement that the confederates did meditate some dangerous enterprise, from which he dissuaded them. See his "Apology," in Dumont, Corps Di-

plomatique, tom. V. p. 392.

⁶³ "Les estatz-généraulx ayans pleine puissance, est le seul remède à nos maulx; nous avons le moyen en nostre pouvoir sans aucune doute de les faire assembler, mais on ne veult estre guéri." Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, tom. II. p. 37.

⁶⁴ "Ils veulent que à l'obstination et endurcissement de ces lousps affamez nous oppositions remonstrances, requestes et en fin parolles, là où de leur costé ils ne cessent de brusler, couper testes, bannir et exercer leur rage en toutes façons. Nous avons le moyen de les refréner sans trouble, sans difficulté, sans effusion de sang, sans guerre, et on ne le veult. Soit donques, prenons la plume et eux l'espée, nous les parolles, eux le fait." Ibid., p. 36.