

fiery zeal which animated most of the Reformers. In his early years, as we have seen, he had been subjected to the influence of the Protestant religion at one period, and of the Roman Catholic at another. If the result of this had been to beget in him something like a philosophical indifference to the great questions in dispute, it had proved eminently favorable to a spirit of toleration. He shrunk from that system of persecution which proscribed men for their religious opinions. Soon after the arrival of the despatches from Segovia, William wrote to a friend: "The king orders, not only obstinate heretics, but even the penitent, to be put to death. I know not how I can endure this. It does not seem to me that such measures are either Christian-like or practicable."⁶⁵ In another letter he says: "I greatly fear these despatches will drive men into rebellion. I should be glad, if I could, to save my country from ruin, and so many innocent persons from slaughter. But when I say anything in the council, I am sure to be misinterpreted. So I am greatly perplexed; since speech and silence are equally bad."⁶⁶

Acting with his habitual caution, therefore, he spoke little, and seldom expressed his sentiments in writing. "The less one puts in writing," he said to his less prudent brother, "the better."⁶⁷ Yet when the occasion demanded it, he did not shrink from a plain avowal of his sentiments, both in speaking and writing. Such was the speech he delivered in council before Egmont's journey to Spain; and in the same key was the letter which he addressed to the regent on receiving the despatches from Segovia. But, whatever might be his

⁶⁵ "Ire Mat gar ernstlich bevelt das man nitt allain die sich in andere leren so begeben, sol verbrennen, sonder auch die sich widderumb bekeren, sol koppen lasen; welges ich wahrlich im hertzen hab gefült, dan

bei mir nit finden kan das cristlich noch thunlich ist." Ibid., tom. I. p. 440.

⁶⁶ Ibid. tom., II. p. 30.

⁶⁷ Ibid., tom. I. p. 432.

reserve, his real opinions were not misunderstood. He showed them too plainly by his actions. When Philip's final instructions were made known to him by Margaret, the prince, as he had before done under Granvelle, ceased to attend the meetings of the council, and withdrew from Brussels.⁶⁸ He met in Breda, and afterwards in Hoogstraten, in the spring of 1566, a number of the principal nobles, under cover, as usual, of a banquet. Discussions took place on the state of the country, and some of the confederates who were present at the former place were for more violent measures than William approved. As he could not bring them over to his own temperate policy, he acquiesced in the draft of a petition, which, as we shall see in the ensuing chapter, was presented to the regent.⁶⁹ On the whole, up to the period at which we are arrived, the conduct of the prince of Orange must be allowed to have been wise and consistent. In some respects it forms a contrast to that of his more brilliant rival, Count Egmont.

This nobleman was sincerely devoted to the Roman Catholic faith. He was stanch in his loyalty to the king. At the same time he was ardently attached to his country, and felt a generous indignation at the wrongs she suffered from her rulers. Thus Egmont was acted on by opposite feelings; and, as he was a man of impulse, his conduct, as he yielded sometimes to the one and sometimes to the other of these influences, might be charged with inconsistency. None charged him with insincerity.

There was that in Egmont's character which early led the penetrating Granvelle to point him out to Philip as a

⁶⁸ Hopper, *Recueil et Mémorial*, p. 67.

⁶⁹ "Tant y a que craignant qu'il n'en suivit une très dangereuse issue et estimant que cette voye estoit la

plus douce et vrayment juridique, je confesse n'avoir trouvé mauvais que la Requête fut présentée." *Apolo- gogy*, in Dumont, tom. V. p. 392.

man who by politic treatment might be secured to the royal cause.⁷⁰ Philip and his sister, the regent, both acted on this hint. They would hardly have attempted as much with William. Egmont's personal vanity made him more accessible to their approaches. It was this, perhaps, quite as much as any feeling of loyalty, which, notwithstanding the affront put on him, as he conceived, by the king, induced him to remain at Brussels, and supply the place in the counsels of the regent which William had left vacant. Yet we find one of Granvelle's correspondents speaking of Egmont as too closely united with the lords to be detached from them. "To say truth," says the writer, "he even falters in his religion; and whatever he may say to-day on this point, he will be sure to say the contrary to-morrow."⁷¹ Such a man, who could not be true to himself, could hardly become the leader of others.

"They put Egmont forward," writes the regent's secretary, "as the boldest, to say what other men dare not say."⁷² This was after the despatches had been received. "He complains bitterly," continues the writer, "of the king's insincerity. The prince has more *finesse*. He has also more credit with the nation. If you could gain him, you will secure all."⁷³ Yet Philip

⁷⁰ "He escrpto diversas vezes que era bien ganar á M. d'Aigmont; él es de quien S. M. puede hechar mano y confiar mas que de todos los otros, y es amigo de humo, y haziéndole algun favor extraordinario señalado que no se haga á otros, demas que será ganarle mucho, pondrá zelos á los otros." Granvelle to Gonzalo Perez, June 27, 1563, Papiers d'Etat de Granvelle, tom. VII. p. 115.

⁷¹ "Il est tant lyé avec les Seigneurs, qu'il n'y a moien de le retirer et pour dire vray, *nutat in religione*, et ce qu'il dira en ce aujourd'huy, il

dira tout le contraire lendemain." Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, Supplément, p. 25.

⁷² "Ce seigneur est á présent celui qui parle le plus, et que les autres mettent en avant, pour dire les choses qu'ils n'oseraient dire eux-mêmes." Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. I. p. 391.

⁷³ "Le prince d'Orange procède avec plus de finesse que M. d'Egmont: il a plus de crédit en général et en particulier, et, si l'on pouvait le gagner, on s'assurerait de tout le reste." Ibid., ubi supra.

did not try to gain him. With all his wealth, he was not rich enough to do it. He knew this, and he hated William with the hatred which a despotic monarch naturally bears to a vassal of such a temper. He perfectly understood the character of William. The nation understood it too; and, with all their admiration for the generous qualities of Egmont, it was to his greater rival that they looked to guide them in the coming struggle of the revolution.



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