

While these events were passing in the Netherlands, the neighbouring monarchy of France was torn by those religious dissensions, which, at this period, agitated, in a greater or less degree, most of the states of Christendom. One half of the French nation was in arms against the other half. At the time of our history, the Huguenots had gained a temporary advantage ; their combined forces were beleaguering the capital, in which the king and Catherine de Medicis, his mother, were then held prisoners. In this extremity, Catherine appealed to Margaret to send a body of troops to her assistance. The regent hesitated as to what course to take, and referred the matter to Alva. He did not hesitate. He knew Philip's disposition in regard to France, and had himself, probably, come to an understanding on the subject with the queen-mother in the famous interview at Bayonne. He proposed to send a body of three thousand horse to her relief. At the same time he wrote to Catherine, offering to leave the Low Countries, and march himself to her support with his whole strength, five thousand horse and fifteen thousand foot, all his Spanish veterans included, provided she would bring matters to an issue, and finish at once with the enemies of their religion. The duke felt how powerfully such a result would react on the Catholic cause in the Netherlands.

He besought Catherine to come to no terms with the rebels ; above all, to make them no concessions. " Such concessions must, of necessity, be either spiritual or temporal. If spiritual, they would be opposed to the rights of God ; if temporal, to the rights

of the king. Better to reign over a ruined land, which yet remains true to its God and its king, than over one left unharmed for the benefit of the Devil and his followers the heretics."³⁶ In this declaration, breathing the full spirit of religious and political absolutism, may be found the true key to the policy of Alva and of his master.

Philip heartily approved of the views taken by his general.³⁷ As the great champion of Catholicism, he looked with the deepest interest on the religious struggle going forward in the neighbouring kingdom, which exercised so direct an influence on the revolutionary movements in the Netherlands. He strongly encouraged the queen-mother to yield nothing to the heretics. "With his own person," he declared, "and with all that he possessed, he was ready to serve the French crown in its contests with the rebels."³⁸ Philip's zeal in the cause was so well understood in France, that some of the Catholic leaders did not scruple to look to him, rather than to their own government, as the true head of their party.³⁹

³⁶ "Or, il vaut beaucoup mieux avoir un royaume ruiné, en le conservant pour Dieu et le roi, au moyen de la guerre, que de l'avoir tout entier sans celle-ci, au profit du démon et des hérétiques, ses sectateurs." Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. i. p. 609.

³⁷ This appears not merely from the king's letters to the duke, but from a still more unequivocal testimony, the minutes in his own handwriting on the duke's letters to him. See, in particular, his summary approval of the reply which Alva tells him he has made to Catherine de Medicis. "Yo lo mismo, todo lo demas que dice en

este capitulo, que todo ha sido muy á proposito." Ibid., p. 591.

³⁸ Ranke, Civil Wars and Monarchy in France in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, (Eng. trans.,) vol. i. p. 349.

³⁹ The cardinal of Lorraine went so far as to offer, in a certain contingency, to put several strong frontier places into Alva's hands. In case the French king and his brothers should die without heirs, the king of Spain might urge his own claim through his wife, as nearest of blood, to the crown of France. "The Salic law," adds the duke, "is but a jest. All difficulties will be easily smoothed

Catherine de Medicis did not discover the same uncompromising spirit, and had before this disgusted her royal son-in-law by the politic views which mingled with her religion. On the present occasion she did not profit by the brilliant offer made to her by Alva to come in person at the head of his army. She may have thought so formidable a presence might endanger the independence of the government. Roman Catholic as she was at heart, she preferred, with true Italian policy, balancing the rival factions against each other, to exterminating either of them altogether. The duke saw that Catherine was not disposed to strike at the root of the evil, and that the advantages to be secured by success would be only temporary. He contented himself, therefore, with despatching a smaller force, chiefly of Flemish troops, under Aremberg. Before the count reached Paris, the battle of St. Denis had been fought. Montmorenci fell; but the royal party was victorious. Catherine made a treaty with the discomfited Huguenots, as favorable to them as if they, not she, had won the fight. Alva, disgusted with the issue, ordered the speedy return of Aremberg, whose presence, moreover, was needed on a more active theatre of operations.

During all this while Margaret's position afforded a pitiable contrast to the splendid elevation which she had occupied for so many years as head of the government. Not only had the actual power passed

away with the help of an army." Philip, in a marginal note to this letter, intimates his relish for the

proposal. See Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. i. p. 593.

from her hands; but she felt that all her influence had gone with it. She hardly enjoyed even the right of remonstrance. In this position, she had the advantage of being more favourably situated for criticising the conduct of the administration, than when she was herself at the head of it. She became more sensible of the wrongs of the people, — now that they were inflicted by other hands than her own. She did not refuse to intercede in their behalf. She deprecated the introduction of a garrison into the good city of Brussels. If this were necessary, she still besought the duke not to allow the loyal inhabitants to be burdened with the maintenance of the soldiers.⁴⁰ But he turned a deaf ear to her petition. She urged that, after the chastisement already inflicted on the nation, the only way to restore quiet was by a general amnesty. The duke replied, that no amnesty could be so general but there must be some exceptions, and it would take time to determine who should be excepted. She recommended that the states be called together to vote the supplies. He evaded this also by saying it would be necessary first to decide on the amount of the subsidy to be raised.⁴¹ The regent felt that in all matters of real moment she had as little weight as any private individual in the country.

⁴⁰ The municipality of Brussels, alarmed at the interpretation which the duke, after Margaret's departure, might put on certain equivocal passages in their recent history, obtained a letter from the regent, in which she warmly commends the good people of the capital as zealous Catholics, loyal to their king,

and, on all occasions, prompt to show themselves the friends of public order. See the correspondence, ap. Gachard, *Analectes Beligues*, p. 343. et seq.

⁴¹ *Documentos Inéditos*, tom iv. p. 481. et seq.

From this state of humiliation she was at last relieved by the return of her secretary, Machiavelli, who brought with him despatches from Ruy Gomez, Philip's favourite minister. He informed the duchess that the king, though reluctantly, had at last acceded to her request, and allowed her to resign the government of the provinces. In token of his satisfaction with her conduct, his majesty had raised the pension which she had hitherto enjoyed, of eight thousand florins, to fourteen thousand, to be paid her yearly during the remainder of her life. This letter was dated on the sixth of October.⁴² Margaret soon after received one, dated four days later, from Philip himself, of much the same tenor with that of his minister. The king, in a few words, intimated the regret he felt at his sister's retirement from office, and the sense he entertained of the services she had rendered him by her long and faithful administration.⁴³

The increase of the pension showed no very extravagant estimate of these services; and the parsimonious tribute which, after his long silence, he now, in a few brief sentences, paid to her deserts, too plainly intimated, that all she had done had failed to excite even a feeling of gratitude in the bosom of her brother.⁴⁴ At the same time with the

⁴² Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. i. p. 583.

⁴³ The king's acknowledgments to his sister are condensed into the sentence with which he concludes his letter, or, more properly, his billet. This is dated October 13, 1568, and is published by Gachard, in the Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. ii., Appendix No. 119.

⁴⁴ "Elle reçut," says De Thou with some humor, "enfin d'Espagne une lettre pleine d'amitié et de tendresse, telle qu'on a coûtume d'écrire à une personne qu'on remercie après l'avoir dépouillée de sa dignité." Hist. Universelle, tom. v. p. 439.

letter to Margaret came a commission to the duke of Alva, investing him with the title of regent and governor-general, together with all the powers that had been possessed by his predecessor.⁴⁵

Margaret made only one request of Philip previous to her departure. This he denied her. Her father, Charles the Fifth, at the time of his abdication, had called the states-general together, and taken leave of them in a farewell address, which was still cherished as a legacy by his subjects. Margaret would have imitated his example. The grandeur of the spectacle pleased her imagination; and she was influenced, no doubt, by the honest desire of manifesting, in the hour of separation, some feelings of a kindly nature for the people over whom she had ruled for so many years.

But Philip, as we have seen, had no relish for these meetings of the states. He had no idea of consenting to them on an emergency no more pressing than the present. Margaret was obliged, therefore, to relinquish the pageant, and to content herself with taking leave of the people by letters addressed to the principal cities of the provinces. In these she briefly touched on the difficulties which had lain in her path, and on the satisfaction which she felt at having, at length, brought the country to a state of tranquillity and order. She besought them to remain always constant in the faith in which they had been nurtured, as well as in their loyalty to a prince so benign and merciful as the king, her brother. In so

⁴⁵ A copy of the original is to be found in the Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. ii., Appendix No. 118.

doing the blessing of Heaven would rest upon them; and for her own part, she would ever be found ready to use her good offices in their behalf.⁴⁶

She proved her sincerity by a letter written to Philip, before her departure, in which she invoked his mercy in behalf of his Flemish subjects. "Mercy," she said, "was a divine attribute. The greater the power possessed by a monarch, the nearer he approached the Deity, and the more should he strive to imitate the divine clemency and compassion."⁴⁷ His royal predecessors had contented themselves with punishing the leaders of sedition, while they spared the masses who repented. Any other course would confound the good with the bad, and bring such calamities on the country as his majesty could not fail to appreciate."⁴⁸ — Well had it been for the fair fame of Margaret, if her counsels had always been guided by such wise and magnanimous sentiments.

The tidings of the regent's abdication were received with dismay throughout the provinces. All the errors of her government, her acts of duplicity, the excessive rigor with which she had of late visited offences, — all were forgotten in the regret felt for her departure. Men thought only of the prosperity which the country had enjoyed under her rule, the

⁴⁶ The letter has been inserted by Gachard in the *Analectes Beligiques*, pp. 295-300.

⁴⁷ "Suplicar muy humilmente, y con toda afeccion, que V. M. use de clemencia y misericordia con ellos, conforme á la esperanza que tantas vezes les ha dado, y

que tenga en memoria que cuanto mas grandes son los reyes, y se acercan mas á Dios, tante mas deben ser imitadores de esta grande divina bondad, poder, y clemencia." *Correspondance de Philippe II.*, tom. i. p. 603.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

confidence which in earlier years she had bestowed on the friends of the people, the generous manner in which she had interposed, on more than one occasion, to mitigate the hard policy of the court of Madrid. And as they turned from these more brilliant passages of her history, their hearts were filled with dismay while they looked gloomily into the future.

Addresses poured in upon her from all quarters. The different cities vied with one another in expressions of regret for her departure, while they invoked the blessings of Heaven on her remaining days. More than one of the provinces gave substantial evidence of their good-will by liberal donatives. Brabant voted her the sum of twenty-five thousand florins, and Flanders, thirty thousand.⁴⁹ The neighbouring princes, and among them Elizabeth of England, joined with the people of the Netherlands in professions of respect for the regent, as well as of regret that she was to relinquish the government.⁵⁰

Cheered by these assurances of the consideration in which she was held both at home and abroad, Margaret quitted Brussels at the close of December, 1567. She was attended to the borders of Brabant by Alva, and thence conducted to Germany by Count Mansfeldt and an escort of Flemish nobles.⁵¹ There

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, tom. ii. p. 6.

⁵⁰ "Superavitque omnes Elizabethæ Angliæ Regina, tam bonæ caræque sororis, uti scribebat, vicinitate in posterum caritura;" "sive," adds the historian, with candid scepticism, "is amor fuit in Margaritam, sive sollicitudo ex Albano successore." Strada, *De Bello Belgico*, tom. i. p. 365.

⁵¹ Historians vary considerably as to the date of Margaret's departure. She crossed the frontier of the Netherlands probably by the middle of January, 1568. At least, we find a letter from her to Philip when she had nearly reached the borders, dated at Luxembourg, on the twelfth of that month.

bidding adieu to all that remained of her former state, she pursued her journey quietly to Italy. For some time she continued with her husband in his ducal residence at Parma. But, wherever lay the fault, it was Margaret's misfortune to taste but little of the sweets of domestic intercourse. Soon afterwards she removed to Naples, and there permanently established her abode on estates which had been granted her by the crown. Many years later, when her son, Alexander Farnese, was called to the government of the Netherlands, she quitted her retirement to take part with him in the direction of public affairs. It was but for a moment; and her present departure from the Netherlands may be regarded as the close of her political existence.

The government of Margaret continued from the autumn of 1559 to the end of 1567, a period of eight years. It was a stormy and most eventful period; for it was then that the minds of men were agitated to their utmost depths by the new doctrines which gave birth to the revolution. Margaret's regency, indeed, may be said to have furnished the opening scenes of that great drama. The inhabitants of the Low Countries were accustomed to the sway of a woman. Margaret was the third of her line that had been intrusted with the regency. In qualifications for the office she was probably not inferior to her predecessors. Her long residence in Italy had made her acquainted with the principles of government in a country where political science was more carefully studied than in any other quarter of Europe. She was habitually industrious; and her robust frame

was capable of any amount of labour. If she was too masculine in her nature to allow of the softer qualities of her sex, she was, on the other hand, exempt from the fondness for pleasure and from most of the frivolities which belonged to the women of the voluptuous clime in which she had lived. She was stanch in her devotion to the Catholic faith; and her loyalty was such, that, from the moment of assuming the government, she acknowledged no stronger motive than that of conformity to the will of her sovereign. She was fond of power; and she well knew that, with Philip, absolute conformity to his will was the only condition on which it was to be held.

With her natural good sense, and the general moderation of her views, she would, doubtless, have ruled over the land as prosperously as her predecessors, had the times been like theirs. But, unhappily for her, the times had greatly changed. Still Margaret, living on the theatre of action, and feeling the pressure of circumstances, would have gone far to conform to the change. But unfortunately she represented a prince, dwelling at a distance, who knew no change himself, allowed no concessions to others, — whose conservative policy rested wholly on the past.

It was unfortunate for Margaret, that she never fully possessed the confidence of Philip. Whether from distrust of her more accommodating temper, or of her capacity for government, he gave a larger share of it, at the outset, to Granvelle than to her. If the regent could have been blind to this, her eyes would soon have been opened to the fact by the rivals

who hated the minister. It was not long before she hated him too. But the removal of Granvelle did not establish her in her brother's confidence. It rather increased his distrust, by the necessity it imposed on her of throwing herself into the arms of the opposite party, the friends of the people. From this moment Philip's confidence was more heartily bestowed on the duke of Alva, even on the banished Granvelle, than on the regent. Her letters remained too often unanswered. The answers, when they did come, furnished only dark and mysterious hints of the course to be pursued. She was left to work out the problem of government by herself, sure for every blunder to be called to a strict account. Rumors of the speedy coming of the king suggested the idea that her own dominion was transitory, soon to be superseded by that of a higher power.

Under these disadvantages she might well have lost all reliance on herself. She was not even supplied with the means of carrying out her own schemes. She was left without money, without arms, without the power to pardon,—more important, with a brave and generous race, than the power to punish. Thus, destitute of resources, without the confidence of her employer, with the people stoutly demanding concessions on the one side, with the sovereign sternly refusing them on the other, it is little to say that Margaret was in a false position: her position was deplorable. She ought not to have remained in it a day after she found that she could not hold it with honour. But Margaret was too covetous of power readily to resign it. Her misunderstanding with her

husband made her, moreover, somewhat dependent on her brother.

At last came the Compromise and the league. Margaret's eyes seemed now to be first opened to the direction of the course she was taking. This was followed by the explosion of the iconoclasts. The shock fully awoke her from her delusion. She was as zealous for the Catholic Church as Philip himself; and she saw with horror that it was trembling to its foundations. A complete change seemed to take place in her convictions,—in her very nature. She repudiated all those with whom she had hitherto acted. She embraced, as heartily as he could desire, the stern policy of Philip. She proscribed, she persecuted, she punished,—and that with an excess of rigor that does little honor to her memory. It was too late. The distrust of Philip was not to be removed by this tardy compliance with his wishes. A successor was already appointed; and at the very moment when she flattered herself that the tranquility of the country and her own authority were established on a permanent basis, the duke of Alva was on his march across the mountains.

Yet it was fortunate for Margaret's reputation that she was succeeded in the government by a man like Alva. The darkest spots on her administration became light when brought into comparison with his reign of terror. From this point of view it has been criticised by the writers of her own time and those of later ages.⁵² And in this way, probably, as the

⁵² See, among others, Strada, *De res Civiles du Pays-Bas*, p. 128; *Bello Belgico*, tom. i. p. 128; Guer- De Thou, *Hist. Gen.*, tom. v. p.

student who ponders the events of her history may infer, a more favorable judgment has been passed upon her actions than would be warranted by a calm and deliberate scrutiny.

439; and Renom de Francia, Alborotos de Flandes, MS., who, in these words, concludes his notice of Margaret's departure: "Dejando gran reputacion de su virtud y un sentimiento de su partida en los

corazones de los vasallos de por acá el qual crecio mucho despues ansi continuo quando se describio el gusto de los humores y andamientos de su sucesor."



JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA

P.C. Monumental de la Alhambra y Generalife
CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA

CHAP. III.

REIGN OF TERROR.

Numerous Arrests.—Trials and Executions.—Confiscations.—Orange assembles an Army.—Battle of Heyligerlee.—Alva's Proceedings.

1568.

IN the beginning of 1568, Philip, if we may trust the historians, resorted to a very extraordinary measure for justifying to the world his rigorous proceedings against the Netherlands. He submitted the case to the Inquisition at Madrid; and that ghostly tribunal, after duly considering the evidence derived from the information of the king and of the inquisitors in the Netherlands, came to the following decision. All who had been guilty of heresy, apostasy, or sedition, and all, moreover, who, though professing themselves good Catholics, had offered no resistance to these, were, with the exception of a few specified individuals, thereby convicted of treason in the highest degree.¹

This sweeping judgment was followed by a royal edict, dated on the same day, the sixteenth of February, in which, after reciting the language of the In-

¹ De Thou, Hist. Gen., tom. v. p. 437.—Meteren, Hist. des Pays-Bas, fol. 54.—The latter historian cites the words of the original instrument.

quisition, the whole nation, with the exception above stated, was sentenced, without distinction of sex or age, to the penalties of treason,—death and confiscation of property; and this, the decree went on to say, “without any hope of grace whatever, that it might serve for an example and a warning to all future time!”²

It is difficult to give credit to a story so monstrous, repeated though it has been by successive writers without the least distrust of its correctness. Not that anything can be too monstrous to be believed of the Inquisition. But it is not easy to believe that a sagacious prince like Philip the Second, however willing he might be to shelter himself under the mantle of the Holy Office, could have lent himself to an act as impolitic as it was absurd; one that, confounding the innocent with the guilty, would drive both to desperation,—would incite the former, from a sense of injury, to take up rebellion, by which there was nothing more to lose, and the latter to persist in it, since there was nothing more to hope.³

The messenger who brought to Margaret the royal permission to resign the regency delivered to Alva his commission as captain-general of the Netherlands. This would place the duke, as Philip wrote to him,

² “Voulans et ordonnans qu'ainsi en soit fait, afin que ceste serieuse sentence serve d'exemple, et donné crainte pour l'advenir, sans aucune esperance de grace.” Meteren, *Hist. des Pays-Bas*, fol. 54.

³ Among contemporary writers whom I have consulted, I find no authorities for this remarkable statement except Meteren and De Thou.

This might seem strange to one who credited the story, but not so strange as that a proceeding so extraordinary should have escaped the vigilance of Llorente, the secretary of the Holy Office, who had all its papers at his command. I have met with no allusion whatever to it in his papers.

beyond the control of the council of finance, in the important matter of the confiscations.⁴ It raised him, indeed, not only above that council, but above every other council in the country. It gave him an authority not less than that of the sovereign himself. And Alva prepared to stretch this to an extent greater than any sovereign of the Netherlands had ever ventured on. The time had now come to put his terrible machinery into operation. The regent was gone, who, if she could not curb, might at least criticise his actions. The prisons were full; the processes were completed. Nothing remained but to pass sentence and to execute.

On the fourth of January, 1568, we find eighty-four persons sentenced to death at Valenciennes, on the charge of having taken part in the late movements, — religious or political.⁵ On the twentieth of February, ninety-five persons were arraigned before the Council of Blood, and thirty-seven capitally convicted.⁶ On the twentieth of March thirty-five more were condemned.⁷ The governor's emissaries were out in every direction. "I heard that preaching was going on at Antwerp," he writes to Philip; "and I sent my own provost there, for I cannot trust the authorities. He arrested a good number of heretics. They will never attend another such meeting. The magistrates complain that the interference of the provost was a violation of their privileges. The magistrates may as

⁴ "Au moyen de la patente de gouverneur général que le duc aura reçue, il pourra faire cesser les entraves que mettait le conseil des finances à ce qu'il disposât des deniers des confiscations." Corre-

spondance de Philippe II., tom. i. p. 609.

⁵ Bulletins de l'Académie Royale de Belgique, tom. xvi. par. ii. p. 62.

⁶ Ibid., ubi suprâ.

⁷ Ibid., p. 63.

well take it patiently.”⁸ The pleasant manner in which the duke talks over the fate of his victims with his master may remind one of the similar dialogues between Petit André and Louis the Eleventh, in “*Quentin Durward*.”

The proceedings in Ghent may show the course pursued in the other cities. Commissioners were sent to that capital, to ferret out the suspected. No less than a hundred and forty-seven were summoned before the council at Brussels. Their names were cried about the streets, and posted up in placards on the public buildings. Among them were many noble and wealthy individuals. The officers were particularly instructed to ascertain the wealth of the parties. Most of the accused contrived to make their escape. They preferred flight to the chance of an acquittal by the bloody tribunal, — though flight involved certain banishment and confiscation of property. Eighteen only answered the summons by repairing to Brussels. They were all arrested on the same day, at their lodgings, and, without exception, were sentenced to death! Five or six of the principal were beheaded. The rest perished on the gallows.⁹

Impatient of what seemed to him a too tardy method of following up his game, the duke determined on a bolder movement, and laid his plans for driving a goodly number of victims into the toils at once. He

⁸ “*Le magistrat s'est plaint de l'infraction de ses privilèges, à cause de l'envoi dudit prévôt; mais il faudra bien qu'il prenne patience.*” *Correspondance de Philippe II.*, tom. ii. p. 13.

⁹ *Vandervynckt, Troubles des Pays-Bas*, tom. ii. pp. 243-247.

The author tells us he collected these particulars from the memoirs and diaries of eye-witnesses, — confirmed, moreover, by the acts and public registers of the time. The authenticity of the statement, he adds, is incontestable.

fixed on Ash Wednesday for the time,—the beginning of Lent, when men, after the Carnival was past, would be gathered soberly in their own dwellings.¹⁰ The officers of justice entered their premises at dead of night; and no less than five hundred citizens were dragged from their beds and hurried off to prison.¹¹ They all received sentence of death!¹² “I have reiterated the sentence again and again,” he writes to Philip, “for they torment me with inquiries whether in this or that case it might not be commuted for banishment. They weary me of my life with their importunities.”¹³ He was not too weary, however, to go on with the bloody work; for in the same letter we find him reckoning that three hundred heads more must fall before it will be time to talk of a general pardon.¹⁴

¹⁰ See the circular of Alva to the officers charged with these arrests, in the *Correspondance de Philippe II.*, tom. ii., Appendix, p. 660.

¹¹ “Et, affin que ledict duc d’Alve face apparoir de plus son affection sanguinaire et tyrannique, il a, passé peu de temps, faict appréhender, tout sur une nuict, [le 3 mars, 1568,] en toutes les villes des pays d’embas, ung grand nombre de ceulx qu’il a tenu suspect en leur foy, et les faict mectre hors leurs maisons et lictz en prison, pour en après, à sa commodité, faire son plaisir et volonté avecque lesdicts prisonniers.” *Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciturne*, tom. iii. p. 9.

The extract is from a memorial addressed by William to the emperor, vindicating his own course, and exposing, with the indignant eloquence of a patriot, the wrongs and calamities of his country. This

document, printed by Gachard, is a version from the German original by the hand of a contemporary. A modern translation—so ambitious in its style that one may distrust its fidelity—is also to be found in the *Archives de la Maison d’Orange-Nassau*, Supplément, p. 91 et seq.

¹² “Se prendieron cerca de quinientos He mandado justiciar todos,” says Alva to the king, in a letter written in cipher, April 13, 1568. (*Documentos Inéditos*, tom. iv. p. 488.) Not one escaped! It is told with an air of *nonchalance* truly appalling.

¹³ “Que cada día me quiebran la cabeza con dudas de que si el que delinquiró desta manera merescé la muerte, ó si el que delinquiró desta otra merescé destierro, que no me dejan vivir, y no basta con ellos.” *Documentos Inéditos*, tom. iv. p. 488.

¹⁴ “En este castigo que agora se

It was common, says an old chronicler, to see thirty or forty persons arrested at once. The wealthier burghers might be seen, with their arms pinioned behind them, dragged at the horse's tail to the place of execution.¹⁵ The poorer sort were not even summoned to take their trial in Brussels. Their cases were despatched at once, and they were hung up, without further delay, in the city or in the suburbs.¹⁶

Brandt, in his History of the Reformation, has collected many particulars respecting the persecution, especially in his own province of Holland, during that "reign of terror." Men of lower consideration, when dragged to prison, were often cruelly tortured on the rack, to extort confessions, implicating themselves or their friends. The modes of death adjudged by the bloody tribunal were various. Some were beheaded with the sword, — a distinction reserved, as it would seem, for persons of condition. Some were sentenced to the gibbet, and others to the stake.¹⁷ This last punishment, the most dreadful of all, was confined to the greater offenders against religion. But it seems to have been left much to the caprice of the judges, sometimes even of the brutal soldiery who superintended the executions. At least we find the Spanish soldiers, on one occasion, in their righteous indignation, throwing into the flames an unhappy Protestant

hace y en el que vendrá despues de Pascua tengo que pasará de ochocientas cabezas." *Ibid.*, p. 489.

¹⁵ "Les Bourgeois qui estoyēt riches de quarante, soixante, et cent mille florins, il les faysoit attacher à la queuē d'un cheval, et ainsi les faysoit trainer, ayant les

mains liées sur le dos, jusques au lieu où on les devoit pendre." *Meteren, Hist. dés Pays-Bas, fol. 55.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, ubi suprà.

¹⁷ "Ille [Vargas] promiscuē laqueo, igne, homines enecare." *Reidanus, Annales, p. 6.*

preacher whom the court had sentenced to the gallows.¹⁸

The soldiers of Alva were many of them veterans who had borne arms against the Protestants under Charles the Fifth,—comrades of the men who at that very time were hunting down the natives of the New World, and slaughtering them by thousands in the name of religion. With them the sum and substance of religion were comprised in a blind faith in the Romish Church, and in uncompromising hostility to the heretic. The life of the heretic was the most acceptable sacrifice that could be offered to Jehovah. With hearts thus seared by fanaticism, and made callous by long familiarity with human suffering, they were the very ministers to do the bidding of such a master as the duke of Alva.

The cruelty of the persecutors was met by an indomitable courage on the part of their victims. Most of the offences were, in some way or other, connected with religion. The accused were preachers, or had aided and comforted the preachers, or had attended their services, or joined the consistories, or afforded evidence, in some form, that they had espoused the damnable doctrines of heresy. It is precisely in such a case, where men are called to suffer for conscience' sake, that they are prepared to endure all,—to die in defence of their opinions. The storm of persecution fell on persons of every condition; men and women, the young, the old, the infirm and helpless. But the weaker the party, the more did his spirit rise to endure his sufferings. Many affecting instances are

¹⁸ Brandt, Reformation in the Low Countries, vol. i. p. 274.

recorded of persons who, with no support but their trust in heaven, displayed the most heroic fortitude in the presence of their judges, and, by the boldness with which they asserted their opinions, seemed even to court the crown of martyrdom. On the scaffold and at the stake this intrepid spirit did not desert them; and the testimony they bore to the truth of the cause for which they suffered had such an effect on the by-standers, that it was found necessary to silence them. A cruel device for more effectually accomplishing this was employed by the officials. The tip of the tongue was seared with a red-hot iron, and the swollen member then compressed between two plates of metal screwed fast together. Thus gagged, the groans of the wretched sufferer found vent in strange sounds, that excited the brutal merriment of his tormentors.¹⁹

But it is needless to dwell longer on the miseries endured by the people of the Netherlands in this season of trial. Yet, if the cruelties perpetrated in the name of religion are most degrading to humanity, they must be allowed to have called forth the most sublime spectacle which humanity can present,—that of the martyr offering up his life on the altar of principle.

It is difficult — in fact, from the data in my possession, not possible — to calculate the number of those who fell by the hand of the executioner in this dismal persecution.²⁰ The number, doubtless, was

¹⁹ "Hark how they sing!" exclaimed a friar in the crowd; should they not be made to dance

too?" Brandt, *Reformation in the Low Countries*, vol. i. p. 275:
²⁰ It will be understood that I

not great as compared with the population of the country,—not so great as we may find left, almost every year of our lives, on a single battle-field. When the forms of legal proceedings are maintained, the movements of justice—if the name can be so profaned—are comparatively tardy. It is only, as in the French Revolution, when thousands are swept down by the cannon, or whole cargoes of wretched victims are plunged at once into the waters, that death moves on with the gigantic stride of pestilence and war.

But the amount of suffering from such a persecution is not to be estimated merely by the number of those who have actually suffered death, when the fear of death hung like a naked sword over every man's head. Alva had expressed to Philip the wish that every man, as he lay down at night, or as he rose in the morning, "might feel that his house, at any hour, might fall and crush him!"²¹ This humane wish was accomplished. Those who escaped

am speaking of the period embraced in this portion of the history, terminating at the beginning of June, 1568, when the Council of Blood had been in active operation about four months,—the period when the sword of legal persecution fell heaviest. Alva, in the letter above cited to Philip, admits eight hundred—including three hundred to be examined after Easter—as the number of victims. (Documentos Inéditos, tom. iv. p. 489.) Viglius, in a letter of the twenty-ninth of March, says fifteen hundred had been already cited before the tribunal, the greater part of whom—they had probably fled the country—were condemned for contumacy. (Epist. ad Hopperum, p. 415.) Grotius, alluding to this

period, speaks even more vaguely of the multitude of the victims, as *innumerable*. "*Stipatæ reis custodiæ, innumeri mortales necati: ubique una species ut captæ civitatis.*" (Annales, p. 29.) So also Hooft, cited by Brandt: "The gallows, the wheels, stakes, and trees in the highways, were loaden with carcasses or limbs of such as had been hanged, beheaded, or roasted; so that the air, which God had made for respiration of the living, was now become the common grave or habitation of the dead." (Reformation in the Low Countries, vol. i. p. 261.) Language like this, however expressive, does little for statistics.

²¹ Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. ii., p. 4.

death had to fear a fate scarcely less dreadful, in banishment and confiscation of property. The persecution very soon took this direction; and persecution when prompted by avarice is even more odious than when it springs from fanaticism, which, however degrading in itself, is but the perversion of the religious principle.

Sentence of perpetual exile and confiscation was pronounced at once against all who fled the country.²² Even the dead were not spared; as is shown by the process instituted against the marquis of Bergen, for the confiscation of his estates on the charge of treason. That nobleman had gone with Montigny, as the reader may remember, on his mission to Madrid, where he had recently died,—more fortunate than his companion, who survived for a darker destiny. The duke's emissaries were everywhere active in making up their inventories of the property of the suspected parties. "I am going to arrest some of the richest and worst offenders," writes Alva to his master, "and bring them to a pecuniary composition."²³ He shall next proceed, he says, against the delinquent cities. In this way a round sum will flow into his majesty's coffers.²⁴ The victims of this class

²² Sentences passed by the Council of Blood against a great number of individuals—two thousand or more—have been collected in a little volume, (*Sententien en Indagingen van Alba*), published at Amsterdam, in 1735. The parties condemned were for the most part natives of Holland, Zealand, and Utrecht. They would seem, with very few exceptions, to have been absentees, and, being pronounced guilty of contumacy, were sen-

tenced to banishment and the confiscation of their property. The volume furnishes a more emphatic commentary on the proceedings of Alva than anything which could come from the pen of the historian.

²³ "Acabando este castigo comenzaré á prender algunos particulares de los mas culpados y mas ricos para moverlos á que vengan á composicion." *Documentos Inéditos*, tom. iv. p. 489.

²⁴ "Destos tales se saque todo

were so numerous, that we find a single sentence of the council sometimes comprehending eighty or a hundred individuals. One before me, in fewer words than are taken up by the names of the parties, dooms no less than a hundred and thirty-five inhabitants of Amsterdam to confiscation and exile.²⁵

One may imagine the distress brought on this once flourishing country by this wholesale proscription; for besides the parties directly interested, there was a host of others incidentally affected; — hospitals and charitable establishments, widows and helpless orphans, now reduced to want by the failure of the sources which supplied them with their ordinary subsistence.²⁶ Slow and sparing must have been the justice doled out to such impotent creditors, when they preferred their claims to a tribunal like the Council of Blood! The effect was soon visible in the decay of trade and the rapid depopulation of the towns. Notwithstanding the dreadful penalties denounced against fugitives, great numbers, especially from the border states, contrived to make their escape. The neighboring districts of Germany opened their arms to the wanderers; and many a wretched exile from the northern provinces, flying across the frozen waters of the Zuyder Zee, found refuge within the hospitable walls of Embden.²⁷ Even in an inland city like Ghent, half the houses, if we may credit the his-

el golpe de dinero que sea posible." Ibid., ubi supra.

²⁵ Sententien van Alva, bl. 122-124.

²⁶ "Combien d'Hospitaux, Veuves, et Orphelins, estoient par ce

moyen privés de leur rentes, et moyès de vivre!" Meteren, Hist. des Pays-Bas, fol. 55.

²⁷ Brandt, Reformation in the Low Countries, vol. i. p. 265.

torian, were abandoned.²⁸ Not a family was there, he says, but some of its members had tasted the bitterness of exile or of death.²⁹ "The fury of persecution," writes the prince of Orange, "spreads such horror throughout the nation, that thousands, and among them some of the principal Papists, have fled a country where tyranny seems to be directed against all, without distinction of faith."³⁰

Yet in a financial point of view the results did not keep pace with Alva's wishes. Notwithstanding the large amount of the confiscations, the proceeds, as he complains to Philip, were absorbed in so many ways, especially by the peculation of his agents, that he doubted whether the expense would not come to more than the profits!³¹ He was equally dissatisfied with the conduct of other functionaries. The commissioners sent into the provinces, instead of using their efforts to detect the guilty, seemed disposed, he said, rather to conceal them. Even the members of the Council of Troubles manifested so much apathy in their vocation, as to give him more annoyance than the delinquents themselves!³² The only person who showed any zeal in the service was Vargas. He was worth all the others of the council put together.³³ The duke

²⁸ Vandervynckt, *Troubles des Pays-Bas*, tom. ii. p. 247.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

³⁰ "Par laquelle auparavant jamais ouye tyrannie et persécution, ledict duc d'Albe a causé partout telle peur, que aulcuns milles personnes, et mesmement ceulx estans principaulx papistes, se sont retirez en dedens peu de temps hors les Pays-Bas, en considération que ceste tyrannie s'exerce contre tous, sans aucune distinction de la re-

ligion." *Correspondance de Guillaume le Taciturne*, tom. iii. p. 14.

³¹ "Que temo no venga á ser mayor la espesa de los ministros que el útil que dello se sacará." *Documentos Inéditos*, tom. iv. p. 495.

³² "El tribunal todo que hize para estas cosas no solamente no me ayuda, pero estorbame tanto que tengo mas que hacer con ellos que con los delinquentes." *Ibid.*, ubi supra.

³³ Vargas passed as summary a

might have excepted from this sweeping condemnation Hessels, the lawyer of Ghent, if the rumors concerning him were true. This worthy councillor, it is said, would sometimes fall asleep in his chair, worn out by the fatigue of trying causes and signing death-warrants. In this state, when suddenly called on to pronounce the doom of the prisoner, he would cry out, half awake, and rubbing his eyes, "*Ad patibulum! Ad patibulum!*" — "To the gallows! To the gallows!"³⁴

But Vargas was after the duke's own heart. Alva was never weary of commending his follower to the king. He besought Philip to interpose in his behalf, and cause three suits which had been brought against that functionary to be suspended during his absence from Spain. The king accordingly addressed the judge on the subject. But the magistrate (his name should have been preserved) had the independence to reply, that "justice must take its course, and could not be suspended from favor to any one." "Nor would I have it so," answered Philip, (it is the king who tells it;) "I would do only what is possible to save the interests of Vargas from suffering by his absence." In conclusion he tells the duke, that Vargas should give no heed to what is said of the suits, since he must be assured, after the letter he has received under the royal hand, that his sovereign fully ap-

judgment on the people of the Netherlands as that imputed to the Inquisition, condensing it into a memorable sentence, much admired for its Latinity. "*Hæretici fraxerunt templa, boni nihil faxerunt contrâ, ergo debent omnes patibulare.*" Reidanus, Annales, p. 5.

³⁴ "Quand on l'éveilloit pour dire son avis, il disoit tout endormi, en se frottant les yeux, *ad patibulum, ad patibulum*, c'est-à-dire, au gibet, au gibet." Aubéri, Mem. pour servir à l'Hist. de Hollande, p. 22.

proves his conduct.³⁵ But if Vargas, by his unscrupulous devotion to the cause, won the confidence of his employers, he incurred, on the other hand, the unmitigated hatred of the people, — a hatred deeper, it would almost seem, than even that which attached to Alva; owing perhaps to the circumstance that, as the instrument for the execution of the duke's measures, Vargas was brought more immediately in contact with the people than the duke himself.

As we have already seen, many, especially of those who dwelt in the border provinces, escaped the storm of persecution by voluntary exile. The suspected parties would seem to have received, not unfrequently, kindly intimations from the local magistrates of the fate that menaced them.³⁶ Others, who lived in the interior, were driven to more desperate courses. They banded together in considerable numbers, under the name of the "wild *Gueux*," — "*Gueux sauvages*," — and took refuge in the forests, particularly of West Flanders. Thence they sallied forth, fell upon unsuspecting travellers, especially the monks and ecclesiastics, whom they robbed, and sometimes murdered. Occasionally they were so bold as to invade the monasteries and churches, stripping them of their rich ornaments, their plate and other valuables, when, loaded with booty, they hurried back to their fastnesses. The evil proceeded to such a length, that the governor-general was obliged to order out a strong force to exterminate the banditti, while at

³⁵ Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. ii. p. 12.

³⁶ Brandt, Reformation in the

Low Countries, vol. i. pp. 263, 264, et alibi.

the same time he published an edict, declaring that every district should be held responsible for the damage done to property within its limits by these marauders.³⁷

It might be supposed that, under the general feeling of resentment provoked by Alva's cruel policy, his life would have been in constant danger from the hand of the assassin. Once, indeed, he had nearly fallen a victim to a conspiracy headed by two brothers, men of good family in Flanders, who formed a plan to kill him while attending mass at an abbey in the neighborhood of Brussels.³⁸ But Alva was not destined to fall by the hand of violence.

We may well believe that wise and temperate men, like Viglius, condemned the duke's proceedings as no less impolitic than cruel. That this veteran councillor did so is apparent from his confidential letters, though he was too prudent to expose himself to Alva's enmity by openly avowing it.³⁹ There were others, however; — the princes of Germany, in particular, — who had no such reasons for dissembling, and who carried their remonstrances to a higher tribunal than that of the governor-general.

On the second of March, 1568, the Emperor Maximilian, in the name of the electors, addressed a letter to Philip, in behalf of his oppressed subjects in the Netherlands. He reminded the king that he had already more than once, and in most affectionate

³⁷ Grotius, *Annales*, p. 29. — Vandervynckt, *Troubles des Pays-Bas*, tom. ii. p. 450.

³⁸ Campana, *Guerra de Fiandra*, fol. 38. — Ferreras, *Hist. d'Espagne*, tom. ix. p. 555.

³⁹ "Valde optaremus tandem aliquam funesti hujus temporis, criminaliumque processuum finem, qui non populum tantum nostrum, sed vicinos omnes exasperant." Viglii *Epist. ad Hopperum*, p. 482.

terms; interceded with him for a milder and more merciful policy towards his Flemish subjects. He entreated his royal kinsman to reflect whether it were not better to insure the tranquillity of the state by winning the hearts of his people, than by excessive rigor to drive them to extremity. And he concluded by intimating that, as a member of the Germanic body, the Netherlands had a right to be dealt with in that spirit of clemency which was conformable to the constitutions of the empire.⁴⁰

Although neither the arguments nor the importance of Maximilian had power to shake the constancy of Philip, he did not refuse to enter into some explanation, if not vindication, of his conduct. "What I have done," he replied, "has been for the repose of the provinces, and for the defence of the Catholic faith. If I had respected justice less, I should have despatched the whole business in a single day. No one acquainted with the state of affairs will find reason to censure my severity. Nor would I do otherwise than I have done, though I should risk the sovereignty of the Netherlands,—no, though the world should fall in ruins around me!"⁴¹—Such a reply effectually closed the correspondence.

The wretched people of the Netherlands, meanwhile, now looked to the prince of Orange as the only refuge left them, under Providence. Those who

⁴⁰ Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. ii. p. 15.

⁴¹ "Y quando por esta causa se aventurassen los Estados, y me viesse á caer el mundo encima." Ibid., p. 27.

Philip seems to have put himself

in the attitude of the "justum et tenacem" of Horace. His concluding hyperbole is almost a literal version of the Roman bard:—

"Si fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidum ferient ruinae."

fled the country, especially persons of higher condition, gathered round his little court at Dillemburg, where they were eagerly devising plans for the best means of restoring freedom to their country. They brought with them repeated invitations from their countrymen to William that he would take up arms in their defence. The Protestants of Antwerp, in particular, promised that, if he would raise funds by coining his plate, they would agree to pay him double the value of it.⁴²

William had no wish nearer his heart than that of assuming the enterprise. But he knew the difficulties that lay in the way, and, like a wise man, he was not disposed to enter on it till he saw the means of carrying it through successfully. To the citizens of Antwerp he answered, that not only would he devote his plate, but his person and all that he possessed, most willingly, for the freedom of religion and of his country.⁴³ But the expenses of raising a force were great,—at the very least, six hundred thousand florins; nor could he now undertake to procure that amount, unless some of the principal merchants, whom he named, would consent to remain with him as security.⁴⁴

In the mean time he was carrying on an extensive correspondence with the German princes, with the leaders of the Huguenot party in France, and even with the English government,—endeavouring to pro-

⁴² Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, Supplément, p. 87.

⁴³ "Il n'est pas seulement content de s'employer à la nécessité présente par le moyen par eulx

proposé touchant sa vasselle, ains de sa propre personne, et de tout ce que resté en son pouvoir." Ibid., p. 88.

⁴⁴ Ibid., ubi supra.

pitiate them to the cause, as one in which every Protestant had an interest. From the elector of Saxony and the landgrave of Hesse he received assurances of aid. Considerable sums seem to have been secretly remitted from the principal towns in the Low Countries; while Culemborg, Hoogstraten, Louis of Nassau, and the other great lords who shared his exile, contributed as largely as their depilated fortunes would allow.⁴⁵ The prince himself parted with his most precious effects, pawning his jewels, and sending his plate to the mint,—“the ornaments of a palace,” exclaims an old writer, “but yielding little for the necessities of war.”⁴⁶

By these sacrifices a considerable force was assembled before the end of April, consisting of the most irregular and incongruous materials. There were German mercenaries, who had no interest in the cause beyond their pay; Huguenots from France, who brought into the field a hatred of the Roman Catholics which made them little welcome, even as allies, to a large portion of the Netherlands; and, lastly, exiles from the Netherlands,—the only men worthy of the struggle,—who held life cheap in comparison with the great cause to which they devoted it. But these, however strong in their pa-

⁴⁵ The funds were chiefly furnished, as it would seem, by Antwerp, and the great towns of Holland, Zealand, Friesland, and Groningen, the quarter of the country where the spirit of independence was always high. The noble exiles with William contributed half the amount raised. This information was given to Alva by Villers, one of the banished lords, after he

had fallen into the duke's hands in a disastrous affair, of which some account will be given in the present chapter. Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. ii. p. 27.

⁴⁶ “Ipse Arausionensis monilia, vasa argentea, tapetes, cætera suppellectilis divendit, digna regio palatio ornamenta, sed exigui ad bellum momenti.” Reidanus, *Annales*, p. 6.

triotism, were for the most part simple burghers untrained to arms, and ill fitted to cope with the hardy veterans of Castile.

Before completing his levies, the prince of Orange, at the suggestion of his friend, the landgrave of Hesse, prepared and published a document, known as his "Justification," in which he vindicated himself and his cause from the charges of Alva. He threw the original blame of the troubles on Granvelle, denied having planned or even promoted the confederacy of the nobles, and treated with scorn the charge of having, from motives of criminal ambition, fomented rebellion in a country where he had larger interests at stake than almost any other inhabitant. He touched on his own services, as well as those of his ancestors, and the ingratitude with which they had been requited by the throne. And in conclusion, he prayed that his majesty might at length open his eyes to the innocence of his persecuted subjects, and that it might be made apparent to the world that the wrongs inflicted on them had come from evil counsellors rather than himself.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The "Justification" has been very commonly attributed to the pen of the learned Languet, who was much in William's confidence, and is known to have been with him at this time. But William was too practised a writer, as Groen well suggests, to make it probable that he would trust the composition of a paper of such moment to any hand but his own. It is very likely that he submitted his own draft to the revision of Languet, whose political sagacity he well understood. And this is

the most that can be fairly inferred from Languet's own account of the matter: "Fui Dillemburgi per duodecim et tredecim dies, ubi Princeps Orangiae mihi et aliquot aliis curavit prolixè explicari causas et initia tumultuum in inferiore Germania et suam responsonem ad accusationes Albani." It fared with the prince's "Justification" as it did with the famous "Farewell Address" of Washington, so often attributed to another pen than his; but which, however much it may have been benefited by the coun-

The plan of the campaign was, to distract the duke's attention, and, if possible, create a general rising in the country, by assailing it on three several points at once. A Huguenot corps, under an adventurer named Cocqueville, was to operate against Artois. Hoogstraten, with the Lord of Villers, and others of the banished nobles, were to penetrate the country in a central direction, through Brabant. While William's brothers, the Counts Louis and Adolphus, at the head of a force, partly Flemish, partly German, were to carry the war over the northern borders, into Groningen; the prince himself, who established his head-quarters in the neighbourhood of Cleves, was busy in assembling a force prepared to support any one of the divisions, as occasion might require.

It was the latter part of April, before Hoogstraten and Louis took the field. The Huguenots were still later; and William met with difficulties which greatly retarded the formation of his own corps. The great difficulty—one which threatened to defeat the enterprise at its commencement—was the want of money, equally felt in raising troops and in enforcing discipline among them when they were raised. "If you have any love for me," he writes to his friend, the "wise" landgrave of Hesse, "I beseech you to aid me privately with a sum sufficient to meet the pay of the troops for the first month. Without this I

sels and corrections of others, bears on every page unequivocal marks of its genuineness.

The "Justification" called out several answers from the opposite party. Among them were two by Vargas and Del Rio. But in the judgment of Viglius—whose bias

certainly did not lie on William's side—these answers were a failure. See his letter to Hopper (*Epist. ad Hopperum*, p. 458). The reader will find a full discussion of the matter by Groen, in the *Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau*, tom. iii. p. 187.

shall be in danger of failing in my engagements,—to me worse than death; to say nothing of the ruin which such a failure must bring on our credit and on the cause.”⁴⁸ We are constantly reminded, in the career of the prince of Orange, of the embarrassments under which our own Washington labored in the time of the Revolution, and of the patience and unconquerable spirit which enabled him to surmount them.

Little need be said of two of the expeditions, which were failures. Hoogstraten had scarcely crossed the frontier, towards the end of April, when he was met by Alva's trusty lieutenant, Sancho Davila, and beaten, with considerable loss. Villers and some others of the rebel lords, made prisoners, escaped the sword of the enemy in the field, to fall by that of the executioner in Brussels. Hoogstraten, with the remnant of his forces, made good his retreat, and effected a junction with the prince of Orange.⁴⁹

Cocqueville met with a worse fate. A detachment of French troops was sent against him by Charles the Ninth, who thus requited the service of the same kind he had lately received from the duke of Alva. On the approach of their countrymen, the Huguenots basely laid down their arms. Cocqueville and his principal officers were surrounded, made prisoners, and perished ignominiously on the scaffold.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ “En quoy ne gist pas seulement le bien de ce fait, mais aussi mon honneur et réputation, pour avoir promis aus gens de guerre leur paier le dict mois, et que j'aymerois mieulx morir que les faillir à ma promesse.” Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, Supplément, p. 89.

⁴⁹ Mendoza, Comentarios, p. 42 et seq.—Cornejo, Disension de Flandes, p. 63.

⁵⁰ Meteren, Hist. des Pays-Bas, fol. 56.—De Thou, Hist. Universelle, tom. v. p. 443.

The enterprise of Louis of Nassau was attended with different results. Yet after he had penetrated into Groningen, he was sorely embarrassed by the mutinous spirit of the German mercenaries. The province was defended by Count Aremberg, its governor, a brave old officer, who had studied the art of war under Charles the Fifth; one of those models of chivalry on whom the men of a younger generation are ambitious to form themselves. He had been employed on many distinguished services; and there were few men at the court of Brussels who enjoyed higher consideration under both Philip and his father. The strength of his forces lay in his Spanish infantry. He was deficient in cavalry, but was soon to be reinforced by a body of horse under Count Megen, who was a day's march in his rear.

Aremberg soon came in sight of Louis, who was less troubled by the presence of his enemy than by the disorderly conduct of his German soldiers, clamorous for their pay. Doubtful of his men, Louis declined to give battle to a foe so far superior to him in everything but numbers. He accordingly established himself in an uncommonly strong position, which the nature of the ground fortunately afforded. In his rear, protected by a thick wood, stood the convent of Heyligerlee, which gave its name to the battle. In front the land sloped towards an extensive morass. His infantry, on the left, was partly screened by a hill from the enemy's fire; and on the right he stationed his cavalry, under the command of his brother Adolphus, who was to fall on the enemy's flank, should they be hardy enough to give battle.

But Aremberg was too well acquainted with the difficulties of the ground to risk an engagement, at least till he was strengthened by the reinforcement under Megen. Unfortunately, the Spanish infantry, accustomed to victory, and feeling a contempt for the disorderly levies opposed to them, loudly called to be led against the heretics. In vain their more prudent general persisted in his plan. They chafed at the delay, refusing to a Flemish commander the obedience which they might probably have paid to one of their own nation. They openly accused him of treachery, and of having an understanding with his countrymen in the enemy's camp. Stung by their reproaches, Aremberg had the imprudence to do what more than one brave man has been led to do, both before and since; he surrendered his own judgment to the importunities of his soldiers. Crying out that "they should soon see if he were a traitor!"⁵¹ he put himself at the head of his little army, and marched against the enemy. His artillery, meanwhile, which he had posted on his right, opened a brisk fire on Louis's left wing, where, owing to the nature of the ground, it did little execution.

Under cover of this fire the main body of the Spanish infantry moved forward; but, as their commander had foreseen, the men soon became entangled in the morass; their ranks were thrown into disorder; and when at length, after long and painful efforts,

⁵¹ "Ains, comme gens predestinez à leur malheur et de leur general, crièrent plus que devant contre luy jusques à l'appeller traistre, et qu'il s'entendoit avec les

ennemis. Luy, qui estoit tout noble et courageux, leur dit: 'Ouy, je vous monstrey si je le suis.'" Brantôme, Œuvres, tom. i. p. 382.

they emerged on the firm ground, they were more spent with toil than they would have been after a hard day's march. Thus jaded, and sadly in disarray, they were at once assailed in front by an enemy who, conscious of his own advantage, was all fresh and hot for action. Notwithstanding their distressed condition, Aremberg's soldiers maintained their ground for some time, like men unaccustomed to defeat. At length, Louis ordered the cavalry on his right to charge Aremberg's flank. This unexpected movement, occurring at a critical moment, decided the day. Assailed in front and in flank, hemmed in by the fatal morass in the rear, the Spaniards were thrown into utter confusion. In vain their gallant leader, proof against danger, though not against the taunts of his followers, endeavoured to rally them. His horse was killed under him; and as he was mounting another, he received a shot from a foot-soldier, and fell mortally wounded from his saddle.⁵² The rout now became general. Some took to the morass, and fell into the hands of the victors. Some succeeded in cutting their way through the ranks of their assailants, while many more lost their lives in the attempt. The ground was covered with the wounded and the dead. The victory was complete.

⁵² Brantôme has given us the portrait of this Flemish nobleman, with whom he became acquainted on his visit to Paris, when sent thither by Alva to relieve the French monarch. The chivalrous old writer dwells on the personal appearance of Aremberg, his noble mien and high-bred courtesy, which made him a favorite with the dames

of the royal circle. "Un tres beau et tres agreable seigneur, surtout de fort grande et haute taille et de tres belle apparence." (Œuvres, tom. i. p. 383.) Nor does he omit to mention, among other accomplishments, the fluency with which he could speak French and several other languages. Ibid., p. 384.

Sixteen hundred of the enemy were left on that fatal field. In the imagination of the exile thirsting for vengeance, it might serve in some degree to balance the bloody roll of victims whom the pitiless duke had sent to their account. Nine pieces of artillery, with a large quantity of ammunition and military stores, a rich service of plate belonging to Aremberg, and a considerable sum of money lately received by him to pay the arrears of the soldiers, fell into the hands of the patriots. Yet as serious a loss as any inflicted on the Spaniards was that of their brave commander. His corpse,⁵³ disfigured by wounds, was recognized, amid a heap of the slain, by the insignia of the Golden Fleece, which he wore round his neck, and which Louis sent to the prince, his brother, as a proud trophy of his victory.⁵³ The joy of the conquerors was dimmed by one mournful event, the death of Count Adolphus of Nassau, who fell bravely fighting at the head of his troops, one of the first victims in the war of the revolution. He was a younger brother of William, only twenty-seven years of age. But he had already given promise of those heroic qualities which proved him worthy of the generous race from which he sprung.⁵⁴

The battle was fought on the twenty-third of May, 1568. On the day following, Count Megen arrived

⁵³ See a letter written, as seems probable, by a councillor of William to the elector of Saxony, the week after the battle. Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau, tom. iii. p. 221.

⁵⁴ It is a common report of historians, that Adolphus and Arem-

berg met in single combat in the thick of the fight, and fell by each other's hands. See Cornejo, *Dissension de Flandes*, fol. 63; Strada, *De Bello Belgico*, tom. i. p. 282; *et al.* An incident so romantic found easy credit in a romantic age.

with a reinforcement; too late to secure the victory, but not, as it proved, too late to snatch the fruits of it from the victors. By a rapid movement, he succeeded in throwing himself into the town of Groningen, and thus saved that important place from falling into the hands of the patriots.⁵⁵

The tidings of the battle of Heyligerlee caused a great sensation through the country. While it raised the hopes of the malecontents, it filled the duke of Alva with indignation,—the greater as he perceived that the loss of the battle was to be referred mainly to the misconduct of his own soldiers. He saw with alarm the disastrous effect likely to be produced by so brilliant a success on the part of the rebels, in the very beginning of the struggle. The hardy men of Friesland would rise to assert their independence. The prince of Orange, with his German levies, would unite with his victorious brother, and, aided by the inhabitants, would be in condition to make formidable head against any force that Alva could muster. It was an important crisis, and called for prompt and decisive action. The duke, with his usual energy, determined to employ no agent here, but to take the

⁵⁵ The accounts of the battle of Heyligerlee, given somewhat confusedly, may be found in Herrera, *Hist. del Mundo*, tom. i. p. 688 et seq.; Campana, *Guerra di Fiandra*, (Vicenza, 1602,) p. 42 et seq.; Mendoza, *Comentarios*, (Madrid, 1592,) p. 43 et seq.; Cornejo, *Disension de Flandes*, fol. 66 et seq.; Carnero, *Guerras de Flandes*, (Brusselas, 1625,) p. 24 et seq.; Strada, *De Bello Belgico*, tom. i. p. 382 et seq.; Bentivoglio, *Guerra di Fiandra*, p. 192 et seq.

The last writer tells us he had heard the story more than once from the son and heir of the deceased Count Aremborg, who sorely lamented that his gallant father should have thrown away his life for a mistaken point of honor.

In addition to the above authorities, I regret it is not in my power to cite a volume published by M. Gachard since the present chapter was written. It contains the correspondence of Alva relating to the invasion by Louis.

affair into his own hands, concentrate his forces, and march in person against the enemy.

Yet there were some things he deemed necessary to be done, if it were only for their effect on the public mind, before entering on the campaign. On the twenty-eighth of May, sentence was passed on the prince of Orange, his brother Louis, and their noble companions. They were pronounced guilty of contumacy in not obeying the summons of the council, and of levying war against the king. For this they were condemned to perpetual banishment, and their estates confiscated to the use of the crown. The sentence was signed by the duke of Alva.⁵⁶ William's estates had been already sequestrated, and a body of Spanish troops was quartered in his town of Breda.

Another act, of a singular nature, intimated pretty clearly the dispositions of the government. The duke caused the Hotel de Culemborg, where he had fixed his own residence before the regent's departure, and where the Gueux had held their meetings on coming to Brussels, to be levelled with the ground. On the spot a marble column was raised, bearing on each side of the base the following inscription: "Here once stood the mansion of Florence Pallant,"—the name of the Count of Culemborg,—“now razed to the ground for the execrable conspiracy plotted therein against religion, the Roman Catholic Church, the king's majesty, and the country.”⁵⁷ Alva by this act

⁵⁶ *Viglii Epist. ad Hopperum*, p. 481. —The sentence of the prince of Orange may be found in the *Sententien van Alba*, p. 70.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*—*Strada, De Bello Bel-*

gico, tom. i. p. 373.—*Vera y Figueroa, Vida de Alva*, p. 101.

The Hotel de Culemborg, so memorable for its connection with the early meetings of the Gueux,

intended doubtless to proclaim to the world, not so much his detestation of the confederacy—that would have been superfluous—as his determination to show no mercy to those who had taken part in it. Indeed, in his letters, on more than one occasion, he speaks of the signers of the Compromise as men who had placed themselves beyond the pale of mercy.

But all these acts were only the prelude to the dismal tragedy which was soon to be performed. Nearly nine months had elapsed since the arrest of the Counts Egmont and Hoorne. During all this time they had remained prisoners of state, under a strong guard, in the castle of Ghent. Their prosecution had been conducted in a deliberate, and indeed dilatory manner, which had nourished in their friends the hope of a favourable issue. Alva now determined to bring the trial to a close,—to pass sentence of death on the two lords, and to carry it into execution before departing on his expedition.

It was in vain that some of his counsellors remonstrated on the impolicy, at a crisis like the present, of outraging the feelings of the nation, by whom Egmont in particular was so much beloved. In vain they suggested that the two nobles would serve as hostages for the good behaviour of the people during his absence, since any tumult must only tend to precipitate the fate of the prisoners.⁵⁸ Whether it was that Alva

had not been long in possession of Count Culemborg, who purchased it as late as 1556. It stood on the Place du Petit Sablon. See Reiffenberg, *Correspondance de Marguerite d'Autriche*, p. 363.

⁵⁸ "His tamen Albanus facile

contemptis, quippe à diuternâ rerum experientiâ suspicax, et suopte ingenio ab aliorum consiliis, si ultrò præsertim offerrentur, aversus." Strada, *De Bello Belgico*, tom. i. p. 386.

distrusted the effect of his master on the importunities, from numerous quarters, in their behalf; or, what is far more likely, that he feared lest some popular rising, during his absence, might open the gates to his prisoners, he was determined to proceed at once to their execution. His appetite for vengeance may have been sharpened by mortification at the reverse his arms had lately experienced; and he may have felt that a blow like the present would be the most effectual to humble the arrogance of the nation.

There were some other prisoners of less note, but of no little consideration, who remained to be disposed of. Their execution would prepare the public mind for the last scene of the drama. There were nineteen persons who, at this time, lay in confinement in the castle of Vilvoorde, a fortress of great strength, two leagues distant from Brussels. They were chiefly men of rank, and for the most part members of the Union. For these latter, of course, there was no hope. Their trials were now concluded, and they were only waiting their sentences. On the ominous twenty-eighth of May, a day on which the Council of Blood seems to have been uncommonly alert, they were all, without exception, condemned to be beheaded, and their estates were confiscated to the public use.

On the first of June, they were brought to Brussels, having been escorted there by nine companies of Spanish infantry, were conducted to the great square in front of the Hotel de Ville, and, while the drums beat to prevent their last words from reaching the ears of the by-standers, their heads were struck off

by the sword of the executioner. Eight of the number, who died in the Roman Catholic faith, were graciously allowed the rites of Christian burial. The heads of the remaining eleven were set upon poles, and their bodies left to rot upon the gibbet, like those of the vilest malefactors.⁵⁹

On the second of June, ten or twelve more, some of them persons of distinction, perished on the scaffold, in the same square in Brussels. Among these was Villers, the companion of Hoogstraten in the ill-starred expedition to Brabant, in which he was made prisoner. Since his captivity he had made some disclosures respecting the measures of Orange and his party, which might have entitled him to the consideration of Alva. But he had signed the Compromise.

On the following day, five other victims were led to execution within the walls of Vilvoorde, where they had been long confined. One of these has some interest for us, Casembrot, lord of Backerzeele, Egmont's confidential secretary. That unfortunate gentleman had been put to the rack more than once, to

⁵⁹ Ibid., ubi supra. — *Guerres Civiles du Pays-Bas*, p. 171. — *Meteren, Hist. des Pays-Bas*, fol. 57.

The third volume of the Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau contains a report of this execution from an eyewitness, a courier of Alva, who left Brussels the day after the event, and was intercepted on his route by the patriots. One may imagine the interest with which William and his friends listened to the recital of the tragedy; and how deep must have been their anxiety for the fate of their other friends,—

Hoorne and Egmont in particular,—over whom the sword of the executioner hung by a thread. We may well credit the account of the consternation that reigned throughout Brussels. "Il affirme que c'estoit une chose de l'autre monde, le crys, lamentation et juste compassion qu'avoient tous ceux de la ville du dit Bruxelles, nobles et ignobles, pour ceste barbare tyrannie, mais que nonobstant, ce cestuy Nero d'Alve se vante en ferat le semblable de tous ceulx qui potra avoir en mains." p. 241.

draw from him disclosures to the prejudice of Egmont. But his constancy proved stronger than the cruelty of his persecutors. He was now to close his sufferings by an ignominious death; so far fortunate, however, that it saved him from witnessing the fate of his beloved master.⁶⁰ Such were the gloomy scenes which ushered in the great catastrophe of the fifth of June.

⁶⁰ If we are to believe Bentivoglio, Backerzeel was torn asunder by horses. "Da quattro cavalli fu smembrato vivo in Bruselles il Casembrot già segretario dell' Agamonte." (Guerra di Fiandra, p. 200.) But Alva's character, hard and unscrupulous as he may have been in carrying out his designs, does not warrant the imputation of an act of such wanton cruelty as this. Happily it is not justified by historic testimony; no notice of the fact being found in Strada, or Meteren, or the author of the *Guerres Civiles du Pays-*

Bas, not to add other writers of the time, who cannot certainly be charged with undue partiality to the Spaniards. If so atrocious a deed had been perpetrated, it would be passing strange that it should not have found a place in the catalogue of crimes imputed to Alva by the prince of Orange. See, in particular, his letter to Schwendi, written in an agony of grief and indignation, soon after he had learned the execution of his friends. *Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau*, tom. iii. p. 244.

CHAPTER IV.

TRIALS OF EGMONT AND HOORNE.

The Examination.—Efforts in their Behalf.—Specification of Charges.
—Sentence of Death.—The Processes reviewed.

1568.

NINE months had now elapsed since the Counts Egmont and Hoorne had been immured within the strong citadel of Ghent. During their confinement they had met with even less indulgence than was commonly shown to prisoners of state. They were not allowed to take the air of the castle, and were debarred from all intercourse with the members of their families. The sequestration of their property at the time of their arrest had moreover reduced them to such extreme indigence, that but for the care of their friends they would have wanted the common necessities of life.¹

During this period their enemies had not been idle. We have seen, at the time of the arrest of the two nobles, that their secretaries and their private papers

¹ Bor, the old Dutch historian, contemporary with these events, says that, "if it had not been for the countess-dowager, Hoorne's step-mother, that noble would ac-

tually have starved in prison from want of money to procure himself food!" Arend, *Algemeene Geschiedenis des Vaderlands*, D. ii. St. v. bl. 37.

had been also seized. "Backerzeele," writes the duke of Alva to Philip, "makes disclosures every day respecting his master, Count Egmont. When he is put to the torture, wonders may be expected from him in this way!"² But all that the rack extorted from the unhappy man was some obscure intimation respecting a place in which Egmont had secreted a portion of his effects. After turning up the ground in every direction round the castle of Ghent, the Spaniards succeeded in disinterring eleven boxes filled with plate, and some caskets of jewels, and other precious articles,—all that now remained of Egmont's once splendid fortune.³

Meanwhile commissioners were sent into the provinces placed under the rule of the two noblemen to collect information respecting their government. The burgomasters of the towns were closely questioned, and where they showed reluctance, were compelled by menaces to answer. But what Alva chiefly relied on was the examination of the prisoners themselves.

On the twelfth of November, 1567, a commission composed of Vargas, Del Rio, and the Secretary Pratz, proceeded to Ghent, and began a personal examination of Egmont. The interrogatories covered the whole ground of the recent troubles. They were particularly directed to ascertain Egmont's relations with the reformed party, but above all, his connection with the confederates,—the offence of deepest dye in the view of the commissioners. The examina-

² "Ce dernier fait chaque jour des aveux, et on peut s'attendre qu'il dira des merveilles, lorsqu'il sera mis à la torture." Correspon-

dance de Philippe II., tom. i. p. 589.

³ Vandervynckt, Troubles des Pays-Bas, tom. ii. p. 247.

tion continued through five days; and a record, signed and sworn to by the several parties, furnished the basis of the future proceedings against the prisoner. A similar course was then taken in regard to Hoorne.⁴

In the mean time the friends of the two nobles were making active exertions in their behalf. Egmont, as we have already seen, was married to a German princess, Sabina, sister of the elector of Bavaria,—a lady who, from her rank, the charm of her manners, and her irreproachable character, was the most distinguished ornament of the court of Brussels. She was the mother of eleven children, the eldest of them still of tender age. Surrounded by this numerous and helpless family, thus suddenly reduced from affluence to miserable penury, the countess became the object of general commiseration. Even the stern heart of Alva seems to have been touched, as he notices her “lamentable situation,” in one of his letters to Philip.⁵

The unhappy lady was fortunate in securing the services of Nicolas de Landas, one of the most eminent jurists of the country, and a personal friend of her

⁴ The *Interrogatoires*, filling nearly fifty octavo pages, were given to the public by the late Baron Reiffenberg, at the end of his valuable compilation of the correspondence of Margaret. Both the questions and answers, strange as it may seem, were originally drawn up in Castilian. A French version was immediately made by the Secretary Pratz,—probably for the benefit of the Flemish councillors of the bloody tribunal. Both the Castilian and French MSS. were pre-

served in the archives of the house of Egmont until the middle of the last century, when an unworthy heir of this ancient line suffered them to pass into other hands. They were afterwards purchased by the crown, and are now in a fitting place of deposit,—the archives of the kingdom of Holland. The MS. printed by Reiffenberg is in French.

⁵ Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. ii. p. 14.

husband. In her name, he addressed letters to several of the German princes, and to the Emperor Maximilian, requesting their good offices in behalf of her lord. He also wrote both to Alva and the king, less to solicit the release of Egmont—a thing little to be expected—than to obtain the removal of the cause from the Council of Blood to a court consisting of the knights of the Golden Fleece. To this both Egmont and Hoorne had a good claim, as belonging to that order, the statutes of which, solemnly ratified by Philip himself, guaranteed to its members the right of being tried only by their peers. The frank and independent tone with which the Flemish jurist, himself also one of the order, and well skilled in the law, urged this claim on the Spanish monarch, reflects honor on his memory.

Hoorne's wife, also a German lady of high connections, and his step-mother, the countess-dowager, were unwearied in their exertions in his behalf. They wrote to the knights of the Golden Fleece, in whatever country residing, and obtained their written testimony to the inalienable right of the accused to be tried by his brethren.⁶ This was obviously a point of the last importance, since a trial by the Council of Blood was itself equivalent to a condemnation.

Several of the electors, as well as other princes of the empire, addressed Philip directly on the subject, beseeching him to deal with the two nobles according to the statutes of the order. Maximilian wrote two

⁶ Supplément à Strada, tom. i. p. 244.

letters to the same purpose; and, touching on the brilliant services of Egmont, he endeavoured to excite the king's compassion for the desolate condition of the countess and her children.⁷

But it was not foreigners only who interceded in behalf of the lords. Mansfeldt, than whom Philip had not a more devoted subject in the Netherlands, implored his sovereign to act conformably to justice and reason in the matter.⁸ Count Barlaimont, who on all occasions had proved himself no less staunch in his loyalty, found himself now in an embarrassing situation,—being both a knight of the order and a member of the Council of Troubles. He wrote accordingly to Philip, beseeching his majesty to relieve him from the necessity of either acting like a disloyal subject or of incurring the reproaches of his brethren.⁹

Still more worthy of notice is the interference of Cardinal Granvelle, who, forgetting his own disgrace, for which he had been indebted to Egmont perhaps as much as to any other person, now generously interceded in behalf of his ancient foe. He invoked the clemency of Philip, as more worthy of a great prince than rigor. He called to mind the former good deeds of the count, and declared, if he had since been led astray, the blame was chargeable on others rather than on himself.¹⁰ But although the cardinal wrote more than once to the king in this strain, it was too late to efface the impression made by former

⁷ Ibid., p. 219.—Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. i. p. 588.

⁸ "La suppliant de prendre en cette affaire la détermination que

la raison et l'équité réclament." Ibid., p. 607.

⁹ Ibid., p. 614.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 599.

communications, in which he had accused his rival of being a party to the treasonable designs of the prince of Orange.¹¹ This impression had been deepened by the reports from time to time received from the regent, who at one period, as we have seen, withdrew her confidence altogether from Egmont. Thus the conviction of that nobleman's guilt was so firmly settled in the king's mind, that, when Alva received the government of the Netherlands, there can be little doubt that Egmont was already marked out as the first great victim to expiate the sins of the nation. The arguments and entreaties, therefore, used on the present occasion to dissuade Philip from his purpose, had no other effect than to quicken his movements. Anxious to rid himself of importunities so annoying, he ordered Alva to press forward the trial, adding, at the same time, that all should be made so clear that the world, whose eyes were now turned on these proceedings, might be satisfied of their justice.¹²

Before the end of December the attorney-general Du Bois had prepared the articles of accusation against Egmont. They amounted to no less than ninety, some of them of great length. They chiefly rested on evidence derived from the personal examination, sustained by information gathered from other quarters. The first article, which, indeed, may be said to

¹¹ "Le Comte d'Egmont," said Granvelle, in a letter so recent as August 17. 1567, "disait au prince que leurs menées étaient découvertes; que le Roi faisait des armements; qu'ils ne sauraient lui résister; qu'ainsi il leur fallait dissimuler, et s'accommoder le mieux possible, en attendant d'autres cir-

constances, pour réaliser leurs desseins." Correspondance de Philippe II., tom. i. p. 561.

¹² "Tout ce qui s'est passé doit être tiré au clair, pour qu'il soit bien constant que dans une affaire sur laquelle le monde entier a les yeux fixés, le Roi et lui ont procédé avec justice." Ibid., p. 609.