

FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER

HISTORY OF THE REVOLT
OF THE NETHERLANDS —
VOLUME 01

Friedrich Schiller

**History of the Revolt of the
Netherlands — Volume 01**

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Friedrich Schiller

History of the Revolt of the Netherlands — Volume 01

PREFACE TO THE EDITION

The present is the best collected edition of the important works of Schiller which is accessible to readers in the English language. Detached poems or dramas have been translated at various times since the first publication of the original works; and in several instances these versions have been incorporated into this collection. Schiller was not less efficiently qualified by nature for an historian than for a dramatist. He was formed to excel in all departments of literature, and the admirable lucidity of style and soundness and impartiality of judgment displayed in his historical writings will not easily be surpassed, and will always recommend them as popular expositions of the periods of which they treat.

Since the publication of the first English edition many corrections and improvements have been made, with a view to rendering it as acceptable as possible to English readers; and, notwithstanding the disadvantages of a translation, the publishers feel sure that Schiller will be heartily acceptable to English readers, and that the influence of his writings will continue to increase.

THE HISTORY OF THE REVOLT OF THE NETHERLANDS was translated by Lieut. E. B. Eastwick, and originally published abroad for students' use. But this translation was too strictly literal for general readers. It has been carefully revised, and some portions have been entirely rewritten by the Rev. A. J. W. Morrison, who also has so ably translated the HISTORY OF THE THIRTY YEARS WAR.

THE CAMP OF WALLENSTEIN was translated by Mr. James Churchill, and first appeared in "Frazer's Magazine." It is an exceedingly happy version of what has always been deemed the most untranslatable of Schiller's works.

THE PICCOLOMINI and DEATH OF WALLENSTEIN are the admirable version of S. T. Coleridge, completed by the addition of all those passages which he has omitted, and by a restoration of Schiller's own arrangement of the acts and scenes. It is said, in defence of the variations which exist between the German original and the version given by Coleridge, that he translated from a prompter's copy in manuscript, before the drama had been printed, and that Schiller himself subsequently altered it, by omitting some passages, adding others, and even engrafting several of Coleridge's adaptations.

WILHELM TELL is translated by Theodore Martin, Esq., whose well-known position as a writer, and whose special acquaintance with German literature make any recommendation superfluous.

DON CARLOS is translated by R. D. Boylan, Esq., and, in the opinion of competent judges, the version is eminently successful. Mr. Theodore Martin kindly gave some assistance, and, it is but justice to state, has enhanced the value of the work by his judicious suggestions.

The translation of MARY STUART is that by the late Joseph Mellish, who appears to have been on terms of intimate friendship with Schiller. His version was made from the prompter's copy, before the play was published, and, like Coleridge's Wallenstein, contains many passages not found in the printed edition. These are distinguished by brackets. On the other hand, Mr. Mellish omitted many passages which now form part of the printed drama, all of which are now added. The translation, as a whole, stands out from similar works of the time (1800) in almost as marked a degree as Coleridge's Wallenstein, and some passages exhibit powers of a high order; a few, however, especially in the

earlier scenes, seemed capable of improvement, and these have been revised, but, in deference to the translator, with a sparing hand.

THE MAID OF ORLEANS is contributed by Miss Anna Swanwick, whose translation of Faust has since become well known. It has been carefully revised, and is now, for the first time, published complete.

THE BRIDE OF MESSINA, which has been regarded as the poetical masterpiece of Schiller, and, perhaps of all his works, presents the greatest difficulties to the translator, is rendered by A. Lodge, Esq., M. A. This version, on its first publication in England, a few years ago, was received with deserved eulogy by distinguished critics. To the present edition has been prefixed Schiller's Essay on the Use of the Chorus in Tragedy, in which the author's favorite theory of the "Ideal of Art" is enforced with great ingenuity and eloquence.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Many years ago, when I read the History of the Belgian Revolution in Watson's excellent work, I was seized with an enthusiasm which political events but rarely excite. On further reflection I felt that this enthusiastic feeling had arisen less from the book itself than from the ardent workings of my own imagination, which had imparted to the recorded materials the particular form that so fascinated me. These imaginations, therefore, I felt a wish to fix, to multiply, and to strengthen; these exalted sentiments I was anxious to extend by communicating them to others. This was my principal motive for commencing the present history, my only vocation to write it. The execution of this design carried me farther than in the beginning I had expected. A closer acquaintance with my materials enabled me to discover defects previously unnoticed, long waste tracts to be filled up, apparent contradictions to be reconciled, and isolated facts to be brought into connection with the rest of the subject. Not so much with the view of enriching my history with new facts as of seeking a key to old ones, I betook myself to the original sources, and thus what was originally intended to be only a general outline expanded under my hands into an elaborate history. The first part, which concludes with the Duchess of Parma's departure from the Netherlands, must be looked upon only as the introduction to the history of the Revolution itself, which did not come to an open outbreak till the government of her successor. I have bestowed the more care and attention upon this introductory period the more the generality of writers who had previously treated of it seemed to me deficient in these very qualities. Moreover, it is in my opinion the more important as being the root and source of all the subsequent events. If, then, the first volume should appear to any as barren in important incident, dwelling prolixly on trifles, or, rather, should seem at first sight profuse of reflections, and in general tediously minute, it must be remembered that it was precisely out of small beginnings that the Revolution was gradually developed; and that all the great results which follow sprang out of a countless number of trifling and little circumstances.

A nation like the one before us invariably takes its first steps with doubts and uncertainty, to move afterwards only the more rapidly for its previous hesitation. I proposed, therefore, to follow the same method in describing this rebellion. The longer the reader delays on the introduction the more familiar he becomes with the actors in this history, and the scene in which they took a part, so much the more rapidly and unerringly shall I be able to lead him through the subsequent periods, where the accumulation of materials will forbid a slowness of step or minuteness of attention.

As for the authorities of our history there is not so much cause to complain of their paucity as of their extreme abundance, since it is indispensable to read them all to obtain that clear view of the whole subject to which the perusal of a part, however large, is always prejudicial. From the unequal, partial, and often contradictory narratives of the same occurrences it is often extremely difficult to seize the truth, which in all is alike partly concealed and to be found complete in none. In this first volume, besides de Thou, Strada, Reynders, Grotius, Meteren, Burgundius, Meursius, Bentivoglio, and some moderns, the Memoirs of Counsellor Hopper, the life and correspondence of his friend Viglius, the records of the trials of the Counts of Hoorne and Egmont, the defence of the Prince of Orange, and some few others have been my guides. I must here acknowledge my obligations to a work compiled with much industry and critical acumen, and written with singular truthfulness and impartiality. I allude to the general history of the United Netherlands which was published in Holland during the present century. Besides many original documents which I could not otherwise have had access to, it has abstracted all that is valuable in the excellent works of Bos, Hooft, Brandt, Le Clerc, which either were impossible for me to procure or were not available to my use, as being written in Dutch, which I do not understand. An otherwise ordinary writer, Richard Dinoth, has also been of service to me by the many extracts he gives from the pamphlets of the day, which have been long lost. I have in vain endeavored to procure the correspondence of Cardinal Granvella, which also would no doubt

have thrown much light upon the history of these times. The lately published work on the Spanish Inquisition by my excellent countryman, Professor Spittler of Gottingen, reached me too late for its sagacious and important contents to be available for my purpose.

The more I am convinced of the importance of the French history, the more I lament that it was not in my power to study, as I could have wished, its copious annals in the original sources and contemporary documents, and to reproduce it abstracted of the form in which it was transmitted to me by the more intelligent of my predecessors, and thereby emancipate myself from the influence which every talented author exercises more or less upon his readers. But to effect this the work of a few years must have become the labor of a life. My aim in making this attempt will be more than attained if it should convince a portion of the reading public of the possibility of writing a history with historic truth without making a trial of patience to the reader; and if it should extort from another portion the confession that history can borrow from a cognate art without thereby, of necessity, becoming a romance.

WEIMAR, Michaelmas Fair, 1788.

INTRODUCTION

Of those important political events which make the sixteenth century to take rank among the brightest of the world's epochs, the foundation of the freedom of the Netherlands appears to me one of the most remarkable. If the glittering exploits of ambition and the pernicious lust of power claim our admiration, how much more so should an event in which oppressed humanity struggled for its noblest rights, where with the good cause unwonted powers were united, and the resources of resolute despair triumphed in unequal contest over the terrible arts of tyranny.

Great and encouraging is the reflection that there is a resource left us against the arrogant usurpations of despotic power; that its best-contrived plans against the liberty of mankind may be frustrated; that resolute opposition can weaken even the outstretched arm of tyranny; and that heroic perseverance can eventually exhaust its fearful resources. Never did this truth affect me so sensibly as in tracing the history of that memorable rebellion which forever severed the United Netherlands from the Spanish Crown. Therefore I thought it not unworth the while to attempt to exhibit to the world this grand memorial of social union, in the hope that it may awaken in the breast of my reader a spirit-stirring consciousness of his own powers, and give a new and irrefragable example of what in a good cause men may both dare and venture, and what by union they may accomplish. It is not the extraordinary or heroic features of this event that induce me to describe it. The annals of the world record perhaps many similar enterprises, which may have been even bolder in the conception and more brilliant in the execution. Some states have fallen after a nobler struggle; others have risen with more exalted strides. Nor are we here to look for eminent heroes, colossal talents, or those marvellous exploits which the history of past times presents in such rich abundance. Those times are gone; such men are no more. In the soft lap of refinement we have suffered the energetic powers to become enervate which those ages called into action and rendered indispensable. With admiring awe we wonder at these gigantic images of the past as a feeble old man gazes on the athletic sports of youth.

Not so, however, in the history before us. The people here presented to our notice were the most peaceful in our quarter of the globe, and less capable than their neighbors of that heroic spirit which stamps a lofty character even on the most insignificant actions. The pressure of circumstances with its peculiar influence surprised them and forced a transitory greatness upon them, which they never could have possessed and perhaps will never possess again. It is, indeed, exactly this want of heroic grandeur which renders this event peculiarly instructive; and while others aim at showing the superiority of genius over chance, I shall here paint a scene where necessity creates genius and accident makes heroes.

If in any case it be allowable to recognize the intervention of Providence in human affairs it is certainly so in the present history, its course appears so contradictory to reason and experience. Philip II., the most powerful sovereign of his line — whose dreaded supremacy menaced the independence of Europe — whose treasures surpassed the collective wealth of all the monarchs of Christendom besides — whose ambitious projects were backed by numerous and well-disciplined armies — whose troops, hardened by long and bloody wars, and confident in past victories and in the irresistible prowess of this nation, were eager for any enterprise that promised glory and spoil, and ready to second with prompt obedience the daring genius of their leaders — this dreaded potentate here appears before us obstinately pursuing one favorite project, devoting to it the untiring efforts of a long reign, and bringing all these terrible resources to bear upon it; but forced, in the evening of his reign, to abandon it — here we see the mighty Philip II. engaging in combat with a few weak and powerless adversaries, and retiring from it at last with disgrace.

And with what adversaries? Here, a peaceful tribe of fishermen and shepherds, in an almost-forgotten corner of Europe, which with difficulty they had rescued from the ocean; the sea their profession, and at once their wealth and their plague; poverty with freedom their highest blessing,

their glory, their virtue. There, a harmless, moral, commercial people, revelling in the abundant fruits of thriving industry, and jealous of the maintenance of laws which had proved their benefactors. In the happy leisure of affluence they forsake the narrow circle of immediate wants and learn to thirst after higher and nobler gratifications. The new views of truth, whose benignant dawn now broke over Europe, cast a fertilizing beam on this favored clime, and the free burgher admitted with joy the light which oppressed and miserable slaves shut out. A spirit of independence, which is the ordinary companion of prosperity and freedom, lured this people on to examine the authority of antiquated opinions and to break an ignominious chain. But the stern rod of despotism was held suspended over them; arbitrary power threatened to tear away the foundation of their happiness; the guardian of their laws became their tyrant. Simple in their statecraft no less than in their manners, they dared to appeal to ancient treaties and to remind the lord of both Indies of the rights of nature. A name decides the whole issue of things. In Madrid that was called rebellion which in Brussels was simply styled a lawful remonstrance. The complaints of Brabant required a prudent mediator; Philip II. sent an executioner. The signal for war was given. An unparalleled tyranny assailed both property and life. The despairing citizens, to whom the choice of deaths was all that was left, chose the nobler one on the battle-field. A wealthy and luxurious nation loves peace, but becomes warlike as soon as it becomes poor. Then it ceases to tremble for a life which is deprived of everything that had made it desirable. In an instant the contagion of rebellion seizes at once the most distant provinces; trade and commerce are at a standstill, the ships disappear from the harbors, the artisan abandons his workshop, the rustic his uncultivated fields. Thousands fled to distant lands, a thousand victims fell on the bloody field, and fresh thousands pressed on. Divine, indeed, must that doctrine be for which men could die so joyfully. All that was wanting was the last finishing hand, the enlightened, enterprising spirit, to seize on this great political crisis and to mould the offspring of chance into the ripe creation of wisdom. William the Silent, like a second Brutus, devoted himself to the great cause of liberty. Superior to all selfishness, he resigned honorable offices which entailed on him objectionable duties, and, magnanimously divesting himself of all his princely dignities, he descended to a state of voluntary poverty, and became but a citizen of the world. The cause of justice was staked upon the hazardous game of battle; but the newly-raised levies of mercenaries and peaceful husbandmen were unable to withstand the terrible onset of an experienced force. Twice did the brave William lead his dispirited troops against the tyrant. Twice was he abandoned by them, but not by his courage.

Philip II. sent as many reinforcements as the dreadful importunity of his viceroy demanded. Fugitives, whom their country rejected, sought a new home on the ocean, and turned to the ships of their enemy to satisfy the cravings both of vengeance and of want. Naval heroes were now formed out of corsairs, and a marine collected out of piratical vessels; out of morasses arose a republic. Seven provinces threw off the yoke at the same time, to form a new, youthful state, powerful by its waters and its union and despair. A solemn decree of the whole nation deposed the tyrant, and the Spanish name was erased from all its laws.

For such acts no forgiveness remained; the republic became formidable only because it was impossible for her to retrace her steps. But factions distracted her within; without, her terrible element, the sea itself, leaguings with her oppressors, threatened her very infancy with a premature grave. She felt herself succumb to the superior force of the enemy, and cast herself a suppliant before the most powerful thrones of Europe, begging them to accept a dominion which she herself could no longer protect. At last, but with difficulty — so despised at first was this state that even the rapacity of foreign monarchs spurned her opening bloom — a stranger deigned to accept their importunate offer of a dangerous crown. New hopes began to revive her sinking courage; but in this new father of his country destiny gave her a traitor, and in the critical emergency, when the foe was in full force before her very gates, Charles of Anjou invaded the liberties which he had been called to protect. In the midst of the tempest, too, the assassin's hand tore the steersman from the helm, and with William of Orange the career of the infant republic was seemingly at an end, and all her guardian angels fled. But

the ship continued to scud along before the storm, and the swelling canvas carried her safe without the pilot's help.

Philip II. missed the fruits of a deed which cost him his royal honor, and perhaps, also, his self-respect. Liberty struggled on still with despotism in obstinate and dubious contest; sanguinary battles were fought; a brilliant array of heroes succeeded each other on the field of glory, and Flanders and Brabant were the schools which educated generals for the coming century. A long, devastating war laid waste the open country; victor and vanquished alike waded through blood; while the rising republic of the waters gave a welcome to fugitive industry, and out of the ruins of despotism erected the noble edifice of its own greatness. For forty years lasted the war whose happy termination was not to bless the dying eye of Philip; which destroyed one paradise in Europe to form a new one out of its shattered fragments; which destroyed the choicest flower of military youth, and while it enriched more than a quarter of the globe impoverished the possessor of the golden Peru. This monarch, who could expend nine hundred tons of gold without oppressing his subjects, and by tyrannical measures extorted far more, heaped, moreover, on his exhausted people a debt of one hundred and forty millions of ducats. An implacable hatred of liberty swallowed up all these treasures, and consumed on the fruitless task the labor of a royal life. But the Reformation throve amidst the devastations of the sword, and over the blood of her citizens the banner of the new republic floated victorious.

This improbable turn of affairs seems to border on a miracle; many circumstances, however, combined to break the power of Philip, and to favor the progress of the infant state. Had the whole weight of his power fallen on the United Provinces there had been no hope for their religion or their liberty. His own ambition, by tempting him to divide his strength, came to the aid of their weakness. The expensive policy of maintaining traitors in every cabinet of Europe; the support of the League in France; the revolt of the Moors in Granada; the conquest of Portugal, and the magnificent fabric of the Escorial, drained at last his apparently inexhaustible treasury, and prevented his acting in the field with spirit and energy. The German and Italian troops, whom the hope of gain alone allured to his banner, mutinied when he could no longer pay them, and faithlessly abandoned their leaders in the decisive moment of action. These terrible instruments of oppression now turned their dangerous power against their employer, and wreaked their vindictive rage on the provinces which remained faithful to him. The unfortunate armament against England, on which, like a desperate gamester, he had staked the whole strength of his kingdom, completed his ruin; with the armada sank the wealth of the two Indies, and the flower of Spanish chivalry.

But in the very same proportion that the Spanish power declined the republic rose in fresh vigor. The ravages which the fanaticism of the new religion, the tyranny of the Inquisition, the furious rapacity of the soldiery, and the miseries of a long war unbroken by any interval of peace, made in the provinces of Brabant, Flanders, and Hainault, at once the arsenals and the magazines of this expensive contest, naturally rendered it every year more difficult to support and recruit the royal armies. The Catholic Netherlands had already lost a million of citizens, and the trodden fields maintained their husbandmen no longer. Spain itself had but few more men to spare. That country, surprised by a sudden affluence which brought idleness with it, had lost much of its population, and could not long support the continual drafts of men which were required both for the New World and the Netherlands. Of these conscripts few ever saw their country again; and these few having left it as youths returned to it infirm and old. Gold, which had become more common, made soldiers proportionately dearer; the growing charm of effeminacy enhanced the price of the opposite virtues. Wholly different was the posture of affairs with the rebels. The thousands whom the cruelty of the viceroy expelled from the southern Netherlands, the Huguenots whom the wars of persecution drove from France, as well as every one whom constraint of conscience exiled from the other parts of Europe, all alike flocked to unite themselves with the Belgian insurgents. The whole Christian world was their recruiting ground. The fanaticism both of the persecutor and the persecuted worked in their behalf. The enthusiasm of a doctrine newly embraced, revenge, want, and hopeless misery drew to their standard adventurers

from every part of Europe. All whom the new doctrine had won, all who had suffered, or had still cause of fear from despotism, linked their own fortunes with those of the new republic. Every injury inflicted by a tyrant gave a right of citizenship in Holland. Men pressed towards a country where liberty raised her spirit-stirring banner, where respect and security were insured to a fugitive religion, and even revenge on the oppressor. If we consider the conflux in the present day of people to Holland, seeking by their entrance upon her territory to be reinvested in their rights as men, what must it have been at a time when the rest of Europe groaned under a heavy bondage, when Amsterdam was nearly the only free port for all opinions? Many hundred families sought a refuge for their wealth in a land which the ocean and domestic concord powerfully combined to protect. The republican army maintained its full complement without the plough being stripped of hands to work it. Amid the clash of arms trade and industry flourished, and the peaceful citizen enjoyed in anticipation the fruits of liberty which foreign blood was to purchase for them. At the very time when the republic of Holland was struggling for existence she extended her dominions beyond the ocean, and was quietly occupied in erecting her East Indian Empire.

Moreover, Spain maintained this expensive war with dead, unfructifying gold, that never returned into the hand which gave it away, while it raised to her the price of every necessary. The treasuries of the republic were industry and commerce. Time lessened the one whilst it multiplied the other, and exactly in the same proportion that the resources of the Spanish government became exhausted by the long continuance of the war the republic began to reap a richer harvest. Its field was sown sparingly with the choice seed which bore fruit, though late, yet a hundredfold; but the tree from which Philip gathered fruit was a fallen trunk which never again became verdant.

Philip's adverse destiny decreed that all the treasures which he lavished for the oppression of the Provinces should contribute to enrich them. The continual outlay of Spanish gold had diffused riches and luxury throughout Europe; but the increasing wants of Europe were supplied chiefly by the Netherlands, who were masters of the commerce of the known world, and who by their dealings fixed the price of all merchandise. Even during the war Philip could not prohibit his own subjects from trading with the republic; nay, he could not even desire it. He himself furnished the rebels with the means of defraying the expenses of their own defence; for the very war which was to ruin them increased the sale of their goods. The enormous sums expended on his fleets and armies flowed for the most part into the exchequer of the republic, which was more or less connected with the commercial places of Flanders and Brabant. Whatever Philip attempted against the rebels operated indirectly to their advantage.

The sluggish progress of this war did the king as much injury as it benefited the rebels. His army was composed for the most part of the remains of those victorious troops which had gathered their laurels under Charles V. Old and long services entitled them to repose; many of them, whom the war had enriched, impatiently longed for their homes, where they might end in ease a life of hardship. Their former zeal, their heroic spirit, and their discipline relaxed in the same proportion as they thought they had fully satisfied their honor and their duty, and as they began to reap at last the reward of so many battles. Besides, the troops which had been accustomed by their irresistible impetuosity to vanquish all opponents were necessarily wearied out by a war which was carried on not so much against men as against the elements; which exercised their patience more than it gratified their love of glory; and where there was less of danger than of difficulty and want to contend with. Neither personal courage nor long military experience was of avail in a country whose peculiar features gave the most dastardly the advantage. Lastly, a single discomfiture on foreign ground did them more injury than any victories gained over an enemy at home could profit them. With the rebels the case was exactly the reverse. In so protracted a war, in which no decisive battle took place, the weaker party must naturally learn at last the art of defence from the stronger; slight defeats accustomed him to danger; slight victories animated his confidence.

At the beginning of the war the republican army scarcely dared to show itself in the field; the long continuance of the struggle practised and hardened it. As the royal armies grew wearied of victory, the confidence of the rebels rose with their improved discipline and experience. At last, at the end of half a century, master and pupil separated, unsubdued, and equal in the fight.

Again, throughout the war the rebels acted with more concord and unanimity than the royalists. Before the former had lost their first leader the government of the Netherlands had passed through as many as five hands. The Duchess of Parma's indecision soon imparted itself to the cabinet of Madrid, which in a short time tried in succession almost every system of policy. Duke Alva's inflexible sternness, the mildness of his successor Requesens, Don John of Austria's insidious cunning, and the active and imperious mind of the Prince of Parma gave as many opposite directions to the war, while the plan of rebellion remained the same in a single head, who, as he saw it clearly, pursued it with vigor. The king's greatest misfortune was that right principles of action generally missed the right moment of application. In the commencement of the troubles, when the advantage was as yet clearly on the king's side, when prompt resolution and manly firmness might have crushed the rebellion in the cradle, the reigns of government were allowed to hang loose in the hands of a woman. After the outbreak had come to an open revolt, and when the strength of the factious and the power of the king stood more equally balanced, and when a skilful flexible prudence could alone have averted the impending civil war, the government devolved on a man who was eminently deficient in this necessary qualification. So watchful an observer as William the Silent failed not to improve every advantage which the faulty policy of his adversary presented, and with quiet silent industry he slowly but surely pushed on the great enterprise to its accomplishment.

But why did not Philip II. himself appear in the Netherlands? Why did he prefer to employ every other means, however improbable, rather than make trial of the only remedy which could insure success? To curb the overgrown power and insolence of the nobility there was no expedient more natural than the presence of their master. Before royalty itself all secondary dignities must necessarily have sunk in the shade, all other splendor be dimmed. Instead of the truth being left to flow slowly and obscurely through impure channels to the distant throne, so that procrastinated measures of redress gave time to ripen ebullitions of the moment into acts of deliberation, his own penetrating glance would at once have been able to separate truth from error; and cold policy alone, not to speak of his humanity, would have saved the land a million citizens. The nearer to their source the more weighty would his edicts have been; the thicker they fell on their objects the weaker and the more dispirited would have become the efforts of the rebels. It costs infinitely more to do an evil to an enemy in his presence than in his absence. At first the rebellion appeared to tremble at its own name, and long sheltered itself under the ingenious pretext of defending the cause of its sovereign against the arbitrary assumptions of his own viceroy. Philip's appearance in Brussels would have put an end at once to this juggling. In that case, the rebels would have been compelled to act up to their pretence, or to cast aside the mask, and so, by appearing in their true shape, condemn themselves. And what a relief for the Netherlands if the king's presence had only spared them those evils which were inflicted upon them without his knowledge, and contrary to his will. ¹ What gain, too, even if it had only enabled him to watch over the expenditure of the vast sums which, illegally raised on the plea of meeting the exigencies of the war, disappeared in the plundering hands of his deputies.

What the latter were compelled to extort by the unnatural expedient of terror, the nation would have been disposed to grant to the sovereign majesty. That which made his ministers detested would have rendered the monarch feared; for the abuse of hereditary power is less painfully oppressive than the abuse of delegated authority. His presence would have saved his exchequer thousands had he been

¹ More modern historians, with access to the records of the Spanish Inquisition and the private communications between Phillip II. and his various appointees to power in the Netherlands, rebut Shiller's kind but naive thought. To the contrary, Phillip II. was most critical of his envoys lack of severity. See in particular the "Rise of the Dutch Republic" and the other works of John Motley on the history of the Netherlands all of which are available at Project Gutenberg. — D.W.

nothing more than an economical despot; and even had he been less, the awe of his person would have preserved a territory which was lost through hatred and contempt for his instruments.

In the same manner, as the oppression of the people of the Netherlands excited the sympathy of all who valued their own rights, it might have been expected that their disobedience and defection would have been a call to all princes to maintain their own prerogatives in the case of their neighbors. But jealousy of Spain got the better of political sympathies, and the first powers of Europe arranged themselves more or less openly on the side of freedom.

Although bound to the house of Spain by the ties of relationship, the Emperor Maximilian II. gave it just cause for its charge against him of secretly favoring the rebels. By the offer of his mediation he implicitly acknowledged the partial justice of their complaints, and thereby encouraged them to a resolute perseverance in their demands. Under an emperor sincerely devoted to the interests of the Spanish house, William of Orange could scarcely have drawn so many troops and so much money from Germany. France, without openly and formally breaking the peace, placed a prince of the blood at the head of the Netherlandish rebels; and it was with French gold and French troops that the operations of the latter were chiefly conducted.² Elizabeth of England, too, did but exercise a just retaliation and revenge in protecting the rebels against their legitimate sovereign; and although her meagre and sparing aid availed no farther than to ward off utter ruin from the republic, still even this was infinitely valuable at a moment when nothing but hope could have supported their exhausted courage. With both these powers Philip at the time was at peace, but both betrayed him. Between the weak and the strong honesty often ceases to appear a virtue; the delicate ties which bind equals are seldom observed towards him whom all men fear. Philip had banished truth from political intercourse; he himself had dissolved all morality between kings, and had made artifice the divinity of cabinets. Without once enjoying the advantages of his preponderating greatness, he had, throughout life, to contend with the jealousy which it awakened in others. Europe made him atone for the possible abuses of a power of which in fact he never had the full possession.

If against the disparity between the two combatants, which, at first sight, is so astounding, we weigh all the incidental circumstances which were adverse to Spain, but favorable to the Netherlands, that which is supernatural in this event will disappear, while that which is extraordinary will still remain — and a just standard will be furnished by which to estimate the real merit of these republicans in working out their freedom. It must not, however, be thought that so accurate a calculation of the opposing forces could have preceded the undertaking itself, or that, on entering this unknown sea, they already knew the shore on which they would ultimately be landed. The work did not present itself to the mind of its originator in the exact form which it assumed when completed, any more than the mind of Luther foresaw the eternal separation of creeds when he began to oppose the sale of indulgences. What a difference between the modest procession of those suitors in Brussels, who prayed for a more humane treatment as a favor, and the dreaded majesty of a free state, which treated with kings as equals, and in less than a century disposed of the throne of its former tyrant. The unseen hand of fate gave to the discharged arrow a higher flight, and quite a different direction from that which it first received from the bowstring. In the womb of happy Brabant that liberty had its birth which, torn from its mother in its earliest infancy, was to gladden the so despised Holland. But the enterprise must not be less thought of because its issue differed from the first design. Man works up, smooths, and fashions the rough stone which the times bring to him; the moment and the instant may belong to him, but accident develops the history of the world. If the passions which co-operated actively in bringing about this event were only not unworthy of the great work to which they were unconsciously subservient — if only the powers which aided in its accomplishment were intrinsically noble, if only the single actions out of whose great concatenation it wonderfully arose were beautiful

² A few French generals who were by and large ineffective; and many promises of gold which were undelivered. — D.W.

then is the event grand, interesting, and fruitful for us, and we are at liberty to wonder at the bold offspring of chance, or rather offer up our admiration to a higher intelligence.

The history of the world, like the laws of nature, is consistent with itself, and simple as the soul of man. Like conditions produce like phenomena. On the same soil where now the Netherlanders were to resist their Spanish tyrants, their forefathers, the Batavi and Belgee, fifteen centuries before, combated against their Roman oppressors. Like the former, submitting reluctantly to a haughty master, and misgoverned by rapacious satraps, they broke off their chain with like resolution, and tried their fortune in a similar unequal combat. The same pride of conquest, the same national grandeur, marked the Spaniard of the sixteenth century and the Roman of the first; the same valor and discipline distinguished the armies of both, their battle array inspired the same terror. There as here we see stratagem in combat with superior force, and firmness, strengthened by unanimity, wearying out a mighty power weakened by division; then as now private hatred armed a whole nation; a single man, born for his times, revealed to his fellow-slaves the dangerous Secret of their power, and brought their mute grief to a bloody announcement. "Confess, Batavians," cries Claudius Civilis to his countrymen in the sacred grove, "we are no longer treated, as formerly, by these Romans as allies, but rather as slaves. We are handed over to their prefects and centurions, who, when satiated with our plunder and with our blood, make way for others, who, under different names, renew the same outrages. If even at last Rome deigns to send us a legate, he oppresses us with an ostentatious and costly retinue, and with still more intolerable pride. The levies are again at hand which tear forever children from their parents, brothers from brothers. Now, Batavians, is our time. Never did Rome lie so prostrate as now. Let not their names of legions terrify you. There is nothing in their camps but old men and plunder. Our infantry and horsemen are strong; Germany is allied to us by blood, and Gaul is ready to throw off its yoke. Let Syria serve them, and Asia and the East, who are used to bow before kings; many still live who were born among us before tribute was paid to the Romans. The gods are ever with the brave." Solemn religious rites hallowed this conspiracy, like the League of the Gueux; like that, it craftily wrapped itself in the veil of submissiveness, in the majesty of a great name. The cohorts of Civilis swear allegiance on the Rhine to Vespasian in Syria, as the League did to Philip II. The same arena furnished the same plan of defence, the same refuge to despair. Both confided their wavering fortunes to a friendly element; in the same distress Civilis preserves his island, as fifteen centuries after him William of Orange did the town of Leyden — through an artificial inundation. The valor of the Batavi disclosed the impotency of the world's ruler, as the noble courage of their descendants revealed to the whole of Europe the decay of Spanish greatness. The same fecundity of genius in the generals of both times gave to the war a similarly obstinate continuance, and nearly as doubtful an issue; one difference, nevertheless, distinguishes them: the Romans and Batavians fought humanely, for they did not fight for religion.

BOOK I

EARLIER HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS UP TO THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Before we consider the immediate history of this great revolution, it will be advisable to go a few steps back into the ancient records of the country, and to trace the origin of that constitution which we find it possessed of at the time of this remarkable change.

The first appearance of this people in the history of the world is the moment of its fall; their conquerors first gave them a political existence. The extensive region which is bounded by Germany on the east, on the south by France, on the north and northwest by the North Sea, and which we comprehend under the general name of the Netherlands, was, at the time when the Romans invaded Gaul, divided amongst three principal nations, all originally of German descent, German institutions, and German spirit. The Rhine formed its boundaries. On the left of the river dwelt the Belgae, on its right the Frisii, and the Batavi on the island which its two arms then formed with the ocean. All these several nations were sooner or later reduced into subjection by the Romans, but the conquerors themselves give us the most glorious testimony to their valor. The Belgae, writes Caesar, were the only people amongst the Gauls who repulsed the invasion of the Teutones and Cimbri. The Batavi, Tacitus tells us, surpassed all the tribes on the Rhine in bravery. This fierce nation paid its tribute in soldiers, and was reserved by its conquerors, like arrow and sword, only for battle. The Romans themselves acknowledged the Batavian horsemen to be their best cavalry. Like the Swiss at this day, they formed for a long time the body-guard of the Roman Emperor; their wild courage terrified the Dacians, as they saw them, in full armor, swimming across the Danube. The Batavi accompanied Agricola in his expedition against Britain, and helped him to conquer that island. The Frieses were, of all, the last subdued, and the first to regain their liberty. The morasses among which they dwelt attracted the conquerors later, and enhanced the price of conquest. The Roman Drusus, who made war in these regions, had a canal cut from the Rhine into the Flevo, the present Zuyder Zee, through which the Roman fleet penetrated into the North Sea, and from thence, entering the mouths of the Ems and the Weser, found an easy passage into the interior of Germany.

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