

"The last but one, Remy."

"And what will be the other?"

"The tomb, Remy."

Chapter 61

WHAT MONSEIGNEUR FRANCOIS, DUC D'ANJOU, DUC DE BRABANT AND
COMTE DE
FLANDERS, WAS DOING IN FLANDERS.

Our readers must now permit us to leave the king at the Louvre, Henri of Navarre at Cahors, Chicot on the road, and Diana in the street, to go to Flanders to find M. le Duc d'Anjou, recently named Duc de Brabant, and to whose aid we have sent the great admiral of France--Anne, duc de Joyeuse.

At eighty leagues from Paris, toward the north, the sound of French voices was heard, and the French banner floated over a French camp on the banks of the Scheldt. It was night; the fires, disposed in an immense circle, bordered the stream, and were reflected in its deep waters.

From the top of the ramparts of the town the sentinels saw shining, by the bivouac fires, the muskets of the French army. This army was that of the Duc d'Anjou. What he had come to do there we must tell our readers; and although it may not be very amusing, yet we hope they will pardon it in consideration of the warning; so many people are dull without announcing it.

Those of our readers who have read "Chicot," already know the Duc d'Anjou, that jealous, egotistical, ambitious prince, and who, born so near to the throne, had never been able to wait with resignation until death offered him a free passage to it. Thus he had desired the throne of Navarre under Charles IX., then that of Charles IX. himself, then that of his brother Henri III. For a time he had turned his eyes toward England, then governed by a woman, and to possess this throne he was ready to have married this woman, although she was Elizabeth, and was twenty years older than himself. In this plan destiny was beginning to smile on him, and he saw himself in the favor of a great queen, until then inaccessible to all human affections. Besides this, a crown was offered to him in Flanders.

He had seen his brother Henri embarrassed in his quarrel with the Guises, but had soon discovered that they had no other aim than that of substituting themselves for the Valois. He had then separated himself from them, although not without danger; besides, Henri III. had at last opened his eyes, and the duke exiled, or something like it, had retired to Amboise.

It was then that the Flemings opened their arms to him. Tired of Spanish rule, decimated by the Duc d'Alva, deceived by the false peace of John of Austria, who had profited by it to retake Namur and Charlemont, the Flemings had called in William of Nassau, prince of Orange, and had made him governor-general of Brabant. A few words about this man, who held so great a place in history, but who will only be named here.

William of Nassau was then about fifty. He was the son of William called the Old, and of Julienne de Stolberg, cousin of that Rene of Nassau killed at the siege of Dizier. He had from his youth been brought up in principles of reform, and had a full consciousness of the greatness of his mission. This mission, which he believed he had received from Heaven, and for which he died like a martyr, was to found the Republic of Holland, in which he was successful. When very young he had been called by Charles V. to his court. Charles was a good judge of men, and often the old emperor, who supported the heaviest burden ever borne by an imperial hand, consulted the child on the most delicate matters connected with the politics of Holland. The young man was scarcely twenty-four when Charles confided to him, in the absence of the famous Philibert Emanuel of Savoy, the command of the army in Flanders. William showed himself worthy of this high confidence: he held in check the Duc de Nevers and Coligny, two of the greatest captains of the time, and under their eyes fortified Philipville and Charlemont. On the day when Charles V. abdicated, it was on William of Nassau that he leaned to descend the steps of the throne, and he it was who was charged to carry to Ferdinand the imperial throne which Charles had resigned.

Then came Philippe II., and in spite of his father's recommendations to him to regard William as a brother, the latter soon found a great difference. This strengthened in his mind the great idea of freeing Holland and Flanders, which he might never have endeavored to carry into effect if the old emperor, his friend, had remained on the throne.

Holland, by his advice, demanded the dismissal of the foreign troops, and then began the bloody struggle of the Spaniards to retain the prey which was escaping from them, and then passed over this unhappy people the vice-royalty of Marguerite of Austria and the bloody consulship of the Duc d'Alva, and then was organized that struggle, at once political and religious, which began with the protest of the Hotel Culembourg, which demanded the abolition of the Inquisition in Holland, and when four hundred gentlemen, walking in pairs, carried to the foot of Marguerite's throne the general desire of the people, as summed up in that protest. At the sight of these gentlemen, so simply clothed, Barlaimont, one of the councilors of the duchess, uttered the word "Gueux," which, taken up by the Flemish gentlemen, so long designated the patriot party. From this time William began to play the part which made him one of the greatest political actors of the world. Constantly beaten by the overwhelming power of Philippe II., he constantly rose again, always stronger after his defeats--always organizing a new army to replace the scattered one, and always hailed as a liberator.

In the midst of these alternate moral triumphs and physical defeats, William learned at Mons the news of the massacre of St. Bartholomew. It

was a terrible wound for Holland, and the Calvinist portion of Flanders lost by it their natural allies, the Huguenots of France.

William retreated from Mons to the Rhine, and waited for events. Some of the Gueux was driven by a contrary wind into the port of Brille: and seeing no escape, and pushed by despair, took the city which was preparing to hang them.

This done, they chased away the Spanish garrison, and sent for the Prince of Orange. He came; and as he wished to strike a decisive blow, he published an ordonnance forbidding the Catholic religion in Holland, as the Protestant faith was forbidden in France.

At this manifesto war recommenced. The Duc d'Alva sent his own son Frederic against the revolters, who took from them Zutphen, Nardem, and Haarlem; but this check, far from discouraging them, seemed to give them new strength. All took up arms, from the Zuyderzee to the Scheldt. Spain began to tremble, recalled the Duc d'Alva, and sent as his successor Louis de Requesens, one of the conquerors at Lepanto.

Then began for William a new series of misfortunes--Ludovic and Henri of Nassau, who were bringing him aid, were surprised by one of the officers of Don Louis near Nimegue, defeated and killed; the Spaniards penetrated into Holland, besieged Leyden, and pillaged Antwerp.

All seemed desperate, when Heaven came once more to the aid of the infant Republic. Requesens died at Brussels.

Then all the provinces, united by a common interest, drew up and signed, on the 8th November, 1576, that is to say four days after the sack of Antwerp, the treaty known under the name of the Treaty of Ghent, by which they engaged to aid each other in delivering their country from the yoke of the Spaniards and other foreigners.

Don John reappeared, and with him the woes of Holland; for in less than two months Namur and Charlemont were taken. The Flemings replied, however, to these two checks by naming the Prince of Orange governor-general of Brabant.

Don John died in his turn, and Alexander Farnese succeeded him. He was a clever prince, charming in his manners, which were at once gentle and firm; a skillful politician, and a good general. Flanders trembled at hearing that soft Italian voice call her friend, instead of treating her as a rebel. William knew that Farnese would do more for Spain with his promises than the Duc d'Alva with his punishments. On the 29th January, 1579, he made the provinces sign the Treaty of Utrecht, which was the fundamental base of the rights of Holland. It was then that, fearing he should never be able to accomplish alone the freedom for which he had been fighting for fifteen years, he offered to the Duc d'Anjou the sovereignty of the country, on condition that he should respect their privileges and their liberty of conscience. This was a terrible blow to Philippe II., and he replied to it by putting a price of 25,000 crowns on the head of William. The States-General assembled at the Hague, then declared Philippe deposed from the sovereignty of Holland, and ordered

that henceforth the oath of fidelity should be taken to them.

The Duc d'Anjou now entered Belgium, and was well received. Philippe's promise, however, bore its fruits; for in the midst of a fete, a pistol shot was heard; William fell, and was believed dead; but he recovered. The shot had been fired by Jean Jaureguy.

The Flemings then, on William's advice, elected Francois, duc of Brabant, sovereign prince of Flanders. Elizabeth of England saw in this a method of reuniting the Calvinists of Flanders and France to those of England--perhaps she dreamed of a triple crown. William, however, took care to hold the Duc d'Anjou in check, and to counteract the execution of any design which would have given him too much power in Flanders. Philippe II. called the Duc de Guise to his aid, on the strength of a treaty which had been entered into by him with Don John of Austria. Henri of Guise consented, and it was then that Lorraine and Spain sent Salcede to the Duc d'Anjou to assassinate him, which would have suited the views of both; but Salcede, as we know, was arrested and executed without having carried his project into execution.

Francois advanced but slowly, however, in Flanders, for the people were more than half afraid of him; he grew impatient, and determined to lay siege to Antwerp, which had invited his aid against Farnese, but when he wished to enter had turned its guns against him. This was the position of the Duc d'Anjou at the time when our story rejoins him, on the day after the arrival of Joyeuse and his fleet.