

was on the point of bringing your majesties into the receipt of a very great and unexpected revenue, . . . I was arrested and thrown, with my two brothers, loaded with irons, into a ship, stripped and very ill treated, without being allowed any appeal to justice. . . . I was twenty-eight years old when I came into your highnesses' service, and now I have not a hair upon me that is not gray; my body is infirm, and all that was left to me, as well as to my brothers, has been taken away and sold, even to the frock that I wore, to my great dishonor. . . . I implore your highnesses to forgive my complaints. I am, indeed, in as ruined a condition as I have related; hitherto I have wept over others—may Heaven now have mercy upon me, and may the earth weep for me. With regard to temporal things, I have not even a blanca for an offering, and in spiritual things, I have ceased here in the Indies from observing the prescribed forms of religion. Solitary in my trouble, sick, and in daily expectation of death, surrounded by millions of hostile savages full of cruelty, and thus separated from the blessed sacraments of our holy church, how will my soul be forgotten if it be separated from the body in this foreign land! Weep for me, whoever has charity, truth, and justice!"

*Ellen Coit Brown.*

## CHAPTER VI.

### *DEFENSE OF FREEDOM ON DUTCH DIKES.*

1. AFTER the destruction of the Roman Empire all Europe was in a state of anarchy. The long domination of Rome, and the general acceptance of the Roman idea that "the state is everything and the individual man nothing," had unfitted the people for self-government. While Rome fell, the system of Rome, leading to absolute monarchy, persisted, and out of it grew the present governments of Europe. The conquering Goths brought in a modifying condition which changed the whole relations of monarch to people. In their social and political relations chieftains of tribes or clans divided power with the monarch, and for many centuries there was continuous warfare between these antagonistic ideas. This period is known as the "dark ages," for while it lasted there was little visible progress, and an apparent almost entire forgetfulness of the ancient civilizations.

2. During the dark ages roving bands of freebooters wandered about from place to place, engaged in robbery, rapine, and murder. To resist this systematic plunder the people placed themselves under the guardianship of some powerful chieftain in the vicinity, and paid a certain amount of their earnings for the privilege of enjoying the remainder. Hence there grew up, in the Gothic communities of Europe, that peculiar state of society known

as "the feudal system." A great chieftain or lord lived in a strong castle built for defense against neighboring lords. A retinue of soldiers was in immediate attendance, who, when not engaged in war, passed their time in hunting and debauchery. All the expenses and waste of the castle and its occupants were defrayed by the peasants who cultivated the lands, and who were all obliged to take up arms whenever their lord's dominions were invaded.

3. In process of time the taxes upon the people became so burdensome that they were reduced to the condition of serfs, when all their earnings, except enough to supply the barest necessities of life, were taken from them in the shape of taxes and rents. A constantly increasing number were yearly taken from the ranks of the industrious to swell the numbers of the soldiery, until Europe seemed one vast camp.

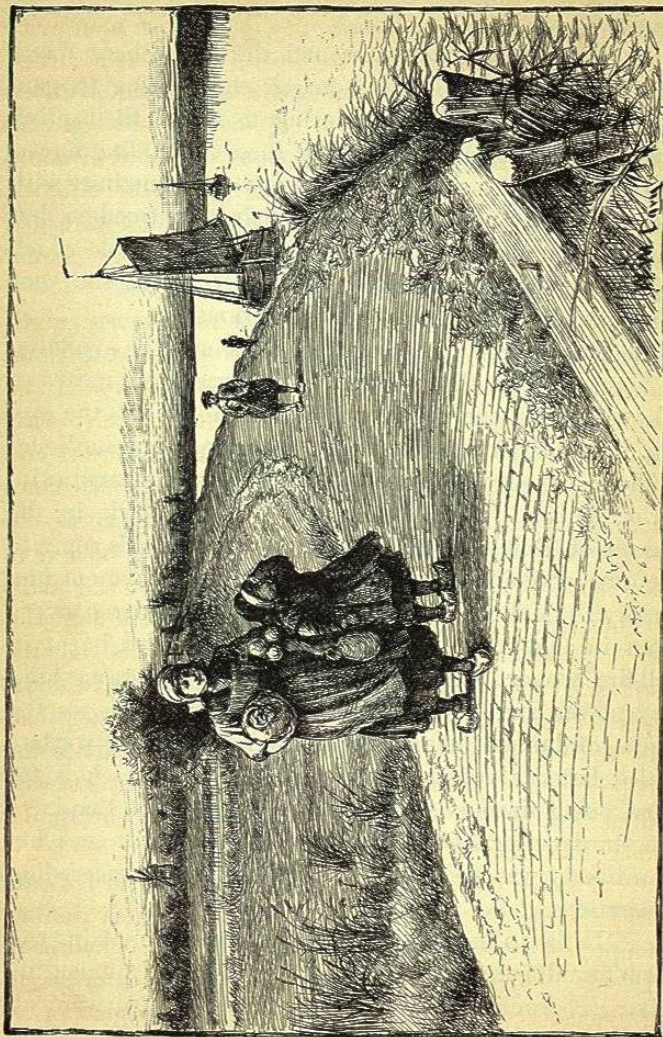
4. The feudal system demanded little in the way of industry except agriculture and rude home manufactures to furnish food and clothing. Arms were purchased from other lands, the best being obtained from the higher civilization of the Moslems; but, as population increased, people began to congregate in centers and towns, and cities sprung up. These called for more varied industries, and a class of people soon became numerous who had little or no dependence upon the feudal lord. To protect themselves, craftsmen engaged in the same kind of work united and formed guilds, and the various guilds, though often warring with each other, united for the common defense. The leaders of the guilds gradually became the heads of notable burgher families who became influential and wealthy. As the cities became powerful the feudal system declined, and in many regions the powerful burghers were able to maintain their independence, not only against their old

lords, but also against the monarch who ruled many lordships.

5. Between the monarch and the lords there was a natural antagonism—the monarch endeavoring to gain power, and the lords endeavoring to retain their privileges. The burghers made use of these contending forces, and by sometimes siding with the one and sometimes with the other, they not only secured their own freedom, but laid the foundation for the freedom of the people which is now generally recognized, and which forms the very corner-stone of our republican institutions.

6. But the rise of the burgher class, and the evolution of human liberty through their work, was by no means an easy task. As the military spirit was dominant, the calling of an artisan was considered derogatory, and lords and soldiers looked down upon the industrious classes as inferior beings. Scott well represents this spirit in the speech of Rob Roy, the Highland chief, in his reply to the offer of Bailie Jarvie to get his sons employment in a factory: "Make my sons weavers! I would see every loom in Glasgow, beam, treadle, and shuttles, burnt in hell-fire sooner!" To break the force of the strong military power, and to secure to the industrious classes the rights of human beings, required a continuous warfare which lasted through many centuries, and which is far from being finished at the present time. But, thanks to the sturdy valor of the burghers of the middle ages, human liberty was maintained and transmitted to succeeding generations.

7. Hitherto in the history of the world mountains had been found necessary for the preservation of human liberty. Thermopylæ, Morgarten, Bannockburn, were all fought where precipitous hill-sides and narrow valleys prevented the champions of freedom from being over-



Dutch Dikes.

whelmed by numbers, and where a single man in defense of his home could wield more power than ten men in attack. The tyrants who lorded it over plains had learned by dear experience to shun mountains and avoid collisions with mountaineers; and, in case of controversies, they always endeavored to gain by stratagem what they could not obtain by force. Austrian tyranny had dashed itself in vain against the Alps, and English tyranny had turned back southward, thwarted and impotent, from the Scotch Highlands.

8. But it was to be demonstrated that liberty might have a home in other than mountain fastnesses. Along the North Sea is a stretch of country redeemed from the ocean. Great dikes, faced with granite from Norway, withstand the tempest from the turbulent ocean, and smaller dikes prevent inundations from rivers. In thousands of square miles the only land above sea-level is the summit of the dikes. In the polders or hollow places below the sea, and saved from destruction only by the dikes, is some of the richest and most productive land in Europe. Here prospered a teeming and industrious population. Agriculture, the parent of national prosperity, flourished as nowhere else. Manufactures and trade had followed in its train, until the hollow lands had become the beehive of Europe. The direction of the most vast commercial enterprises had been transferred from the lagoons of Venice to the cities of the dikes.

9. This country for centuries had constituted a part of the German Empire. At one side of the great lines of communication, and moored so far out to sea, it had been overlooked and neglected to a certain degree by the reigning dynasties; and out of this neglect grew its prosperity. While the rule of the central government was nearly nominal, the feudal lords never obtained a strong foothold in

the country, and the order and peace of the communities were preserved by municipal officers chosen by suffrage. In process of time wealthy burgher families fairly divided political influence with princes, and dictated a policy at once wise and humane. Extortioners were suppressed, industries fostered, and peace maintained.

10. In the religious controversies which followed the preaching of Luther, the eastern provinces of the hollow land almost exclusively espoused the new religion, while the western provinces clung as tenaciously to the old. While this difference in religious opinions gave rise to disputes, and tended toward the disruption of social relations, for many years toleration was practiced and peace preserved.

11. During the reign of Charles V as emperor of Germany, the lowland countries were permitted to go on in their career of prosperity, with the exception of a religious persecution. Charles was a bigot, and, for a time, he tried to put down heresy with a strong hand; but, finding the new doctrines firmly established in the hearts of the people, he relaxed his persecutions, and permitted things to take pretty much their own course.

12. On the abdication of Charles V, in 1555, Spain and the low countries fell to the lot of Philip II. Notwithstanding the riches which had poured into Spain from the plunder of Mexico and Peru, the Netherlands were the richest part of Philip's dominions, yielding him a princely revenue. But the free spirit manifested by these artisans, in their homes by the sea, was contrary to all Philip's ideas of government, and was constantly galling to his personal pride. So he determined to reduce his Teutonic subjects to the same degree of abject submission that he had the residents of the sunny lands of Spain. To give intensity to his resolve, Philip was a cold-blooded

bigot, and in carrying out his state designs he was also gratifying his religious animosities, and giving expression to his almost insane religious hatreds. His policy was directly calculated to ruin the most prosperous part of his own dominions—to "kill the goose which laid the golden egg."

13. Philip spent the first five years of his reign in the Netherlands, waiting the issue of a war in which he was engaged with France. During this period his Flemish and Dutch subjects began to have some experience of his government. They observed with alarm that the king hated the country and distrusted the people. He would speak no other language than Spanish; his counselors were Spaniards; he kept Spaniards alone about his person, and it was to Spaniards that all vacant posts were assigned. Besides, certain of his measures gave great dissatisfaction. He re-enacted the persecuting edicts against the Protestants which his father, in the end of his reign, had suffered to fall into disuse; and the severities which ensued began to drive hundreds of the most useful citizens out of the country, as well as to injure trade by deterring Protestant merchants from the Dutch and Flemish ports. Dark hints, too, were thrown out that he intended to establish an ecclesiastical court in the Netherlands similar to the Spanish Inquisition, and the spirit of Catholics as well as Protestants revolted from the thought that this chamber of horrors should ever become one of the institutions of their free land.

14. He had also increased the number of bishops in the Netherlands from five to seventeen; and this was regarded as the mere appointment of twelve persons devoted to the Spanish interest, who would help, if necessary, to overawe the people. Lastly, he kept the provinces full of Spanish troops, and this was in direct violation of a fundamental law of the country.

15. Against these measures the nobles and citizens complained bitterly, and from them drew sad anticipations of the future. Nor were they more satisfied with the address in which, through the bishop of Arras as his spokesman, he took farewell of them at a convention of the states held at Ghent previous to his departure to Spain. The oration recommended severity against heresy, and only promised the withdrawal of the foreign troops. The reply of the states was firm and bold, and the recollection of it must have rankled afterward in the revengeful mind of Philip. "I would rather be no king at all," he said to one of his ministers at the time, "than have heretics for my subjects." But suppressing his resentment in the mean time, he set sail for Spain in August, 1559, leaving his half-sister to act as his viceroy in the Netherlands.

16. At this juncture, while the Dutch were threatened by a complete subjugation of their liberties, a champion arose who in the end proved more than a match for Philip both in diplomatic fields and in military operations. This was William, Prince of Orange, one of the highest nobility, but with his whole heart in sympathy with the people. Inheriting a personality almost perfect in physical, mental, and moral vigor and harmony, he early manifested a prudence and wisdom which gained for him the entire confidence of the suspicious and experienced Charles V.

17. It was on the arm of William of Orange that Charles had leaned for support on that memorable day when, in the assembly of the states at Brussels, he rose feebly from his seat, and declared his abdication of the sovereign power; and it was said that one of Charles's last advices to his son Philip was to cultivate the goodwill of the people of the Netherlands, and especially to

defer to the counsels of the Prince of Orange. When, therefore, in the year 1555, Philip began his rule in the Netherlands, there were few persons who were either better entitled or more truly disposed to act the part of faithful and loyal advisers than William of Nassau, then twenty-two years of age.

18. But, close as had been William's relations to the late emperor, there were stronger principles and feelings in his mind than gratitude to the son of the monarch whom he had loved. He had thought deeply on the question, how a nation should be governed, and had come to entertain opinions very hostile to arbitrary power; he had observed what appeared to him, as a Catholic, gross blunders in the mode of treating religious differences; he had imbibed deeply the Dutch spirit of independence; and it was the most earnest wish of his heart to see the Netherlands prosperous and happy. Nor was he at all a visionary, or a man whose activity would be officious and troublesome; he was eminently a practical man, one who had a strong sense of what is expedient in existing circumstances; and his manner was so grave and quiet that he obtained the name of "William the Silent." Still, many things occurred during Philip's four years' residence in the Netherlands to make him speak out and remonstrate. He was one of those who tried to get the king to use gentler and more popular measures, and the consequence was that a decided aversion grew up in the dark and haughty mind of Philip to the Prince of Orange.

19. After the departure of Philip the administration of the Duchess of Parma produced violent discontent. The persecutions of the Protestants were becoming so fierce that, over and above the suffering inflicted on individuals, the commerce of the country was sensibly falling off. The establishment of a court like the Inqui-

sition was still in contemplation; Spaniards were still appointed to places of trust in preference to Flemings; and finally, the Spanish soldiers, who ought to have been removed long ago, were still burdening the country with their presence. The woes of the people were becoming intolerable; occasionally there were slight outbreaks of violence; and a low murmur of vehement feeling ran through the whole population, foreboding a general eruption. "Our poor fatherland!" they said to each other; "God has afflicted us with two enemies, water and Spaniards; we have built dikes and overcome the one, but how shall we get rid of the other? Why, if nothing better occurs, we know one way at least, and we shall keep it in reserve—we can set the two enemies against each other. We can break down the dikes, inundate the country, and let the water and the Spaniards fight it out between them."

20. About this time, too, the decrees of the famous Council of Trent, which had been convened in 1545 to take into consideration the state of the Church and the means of checking the new religion, and which had closed its sittings in the end of 1563, were made public; and Philip, the most zealous Catholic of his time, issued immediate orders for their being enforced both in Spain and in the Netherlands. In Spain the decrees were received as a matter of course, the council having authority over the Catholic people; but the attempt to force the mandates of an ecclesiastical body upon a people who neither acknowledged its authority nor believed in its truth, was justly regarded as an outrage, and the whole country burst out in a storm of indignation. In many places the decrees were not executed at all; and wherever the authorities did attempt to execute them, the people rose and compelled them to desist.

21. A political club or confederacy was organized among the nobility for the express purpose of resisting the establishment of the Inquisition. They bound themselves by a solemn oath "to oppose the introduction of the Inquisition, whether it were attempted openly or secretly, or by whatever name it should be called," and also to protect and defend each other from all the consequences which might result from their having formed this league.

22. Perplexed and alarmed, the regent implored the Prince of Orange and his two associates, Counts Egmont and Horn, to return to the council and give her their advice. They did so; and a speech of the Prince of Orange, in which he asserted strongly the utter folly of attempting to suppress opinion by force, and argued that "such is the nature of heresy that if it rests it rusts, but whoever rubs it whets it," had the effect of inclining the regent to mitigate the ferocity of her former edicts. Meanwhile the confederates were becoming bolder and more numerous. Assembling in great numbers at Brussels, they walked in procession through the streets to the palace of the regent, where they were admitted to an interview. In reply to their petition, she said she was willing to send one or more persons to Spain to lay the complaint before the king.

23. While the nobles and influential persons were thus preparing to co-operate, in case of a collision with the Spanish government, a sudden and disastrous movement occurred among the lower classes. It was stated and believed that the regent had given permission for the exercise of the Protestant form of worship, and throughout Flanders multitudes poured into the fields after the preachers. The reaction after the suppression of the previous years was very great, and the pent-up emotions

were easily kindled into rage against the Catholics. Led on by fanatics, the ignorant masses made a concerted attack upon the Catholic churches, shattering their windows, tearing up their pavements, and destroying all the objects of art which they contained. The cathedral at Antwerp was the special object of attack, and it was reduced to an almost hopeless ruin. The patriot nobles exerted their influence, and at last succeeded in suppressing the violence and in restoring order.

24. Before the news of this outburst had reached Spain, Philip had resolved to crush the confederacy and break the proud spirit of the Netherlands. Secret orders were given for the collection of troops; the regent was instructed to amuse the patriots until the means of punishing them were ready; and in a short time it was hoped that there would no longer be a patriot or a heretic in the Low Countries. It is easy to conceive with what rage and bitterness of heart Philip, while indulging these dreams, must have received intelligence of the terrible doings of the iconoclasts. But, as cautious and dissimulating as he was obstinate and revengeful, he concealed his intentions in the mean time, announced them to the regent only in secret letters and dispatches, and held out hopes in public to the patriots and people of the Netherlands that he was soon to pay them a visit in person to inquire into the condition of affairs.

25. William had secret intelligence of the purpose of Philip in time to avert its worst consequences. The man whom Philip sent into the Netherlands at the head of the army, as a fit instrument of his purpose of vengeance, was the Duke of Alva, a personage who united the most consummate military skill with the disposition of a ruffian, ready to undertake any enterprise however base. Such was the man who, at the age of sixty, in the month

of August, 1567, made his entry into the Netherlands at the head of an army of fifteen thousand men. One of his first acts was the arrest of the Counts Egmont and Horn. The regent resigned, and Alva was left in supreme control. Now ensued the grand struggle in the Netherlands. On the one hand was a nation of quiet, orderly people, industrious in a high degree, prosperous in their commerce, and disposed to remain peaceful subjects to a foreign monarch; on the other hand was a sovereign who, unthankful for the blessing of reigning over such a happy and well-disposed nation, and stimulated by passion and bigotry, resolved on compelling all to submit to his will on penalty of death.

26. Alva at once commenced his persecutions. Supported by his army, blood was shed like water. The Inquisition was established, and began its work of unspeakable horrors in the Netherlands. Patriots and Protestants in crowds left the country. The leading men of the Netherlands were arrested and executed. Under circumstances of extreme ferocity Counts Egmont and Horn were beheaded at Brussels. Overwhelming taxes were imposed upon the people, and during the short period of his administration Alva executed eighteen thousand patriots, including many Catholics; for, in his rage against the free spirit of the Netherlanders, he recognized no distinction in condition or in religious belief.

27. In the mean time the Prince of Orange was active in devising means to liberate his unfortunate country from the terrible scourge to which it was subjected. For five years he battled incessantly against the Spanish power. Now he entered into combination with the English and now with the French, with the vain hope of obtaining a sufficient force to drive the Spaniards out of the country. Twice he raised an army and marched to the aid of the