

wolt, Wigbold Freriks, Jan Bruins, Johan Clood, Haijo Eppens, and Roelof Robers.¹

The political affairs of the Netherlands were at that time perilously complicated. The Prince of Parma, appointed governor-general of the Low Countries by Philip II., King of Spain, and William the Silent, Prince of Orange, upholding the cause of the United Provinces, were waging a war which gave little promise of speedily ending in a permanent peace. At the beginning of the year 1580, the Prince of Orange was directing his energies, as he had been since the Pacification of Ghent (signed November 8, 1576), to get the Netherland provinces to maintain peaceable relations with one another. The Union of Utrecht, ostensibly framed, on January 29, 1579, for the protection of the provinces against the attempts of the Spaniards to separate and dismember them and to bring them into subjection, explicitly provided that the provinces should not interfere with one another in matters of religious belief but should respect the right of all the inhabitants to exercise without molestation the faith espoused by them.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Count of Renneberg, the chief magistrate of Friesland, Overijssel, and Groningen, had accepted the Union of Utrecht, a part of Friesland and the entire province of Overijssel were still unbound by the compact. The watchful care which the Prince of Orange bestowed upon the provinces united to oppose the machinations of the Duke of Parma fortunately led him to suspect that the Count of Renneberg was conspiring to transfer the northern provinces to the control of the Spanish governor. Aware that the count had not the means at his command to accomplish this intention, the Prince of Orange made overtures to have a conference with the disaffected stadtholder, and sent to him certain of his loyal acquaintances to urge him to visit Utrecht, and to renew there his fealty to the States-General.

These emissaries endeavored to convince him that the King of Spain could not put him in possession of any more property than that which he then owned; that his authority could not be made more extensive and important; that no province in all the Netherlands was comparable to that of Groningen, of which he was then governor. They further argued that the province, besides having "so many fair towns, was also enriched with five great and as many small seaports, whereby it was impossible for it to be wholly lost or taken from him by the warres, for that if it so fall out that the country should be overrun, yet these townes would be able to maintaine themselves by traffique at sea, whereas, to the contrary, the places under the king's command must in the end, by force, be constrained to yield: for that their champaign country

¹ *Vide*: List of officers of the city of Groningen in 1580 in the Appendix. Document No. 3.