

sion.¹³ The cardinal was stunned by it. He at once saw his ruin, and the vision of glory vanished forever. He withdrew, more dead than alive, to his house. There he soon took to his bed; and in a short time, in September, 1572, he breathed his last. His fate was that of more than one minister whose head had been made giddy by the height to which he had climbed.¹⁴

The council of state, under its two great leaders, Alva and Ruy Gomez, was sure to be divided on every question of importance. This was a fruitful source of embarrassment, and to private suitors, especially, occasioned infinite delay. Such was the hostility of the parties to each other that if an applicant for favor secured the good will of one of the chiefs he was very certain to encounter the ill will of the other.¹⁵ He was a skilful pilot who in such cross seas could keep his course.

Yet the existence of these divisions does not seem to have been discouraged by Philip, who saw in them only the natural consequence of a rivalry for his favor. They gave him, moreover, the advantage of seeing every question of moment well canvassed, and, by furnishing

¹³ The anonymous author of a contemporary relation speaks of the king as a person little subject to passions of any kind. The language is striking: "E questo Re poco soggetto alle passioni, venga ciò, o per inclinazione naturale, o per costume; e quasi non appariscono in lui i primi movimenti nè dell' allegrezza, nè del dolore, nè dell' ira ancora." MS.

¹⁴ "El Rey le hablò tan asperamente sobre el afinar una verdad, que le matò brevemente," says Cabrera emphatically. Filipe Segundo, p. 699.

¹⁵ "Perchè chi vuole il favore del duca d'Alva perde quello di Ruy Gomez, e chi cerca il favore di Ruy Gomez, non ha quello del duca d'Alva." Relazione di Soriano, MS.