

Zealand, Friesland, and the Ommelands, and who rescued the Netherlands from the tyrannical rule of Spain. This family was in every respect illustrious, being of the German house of Nassau (known in history for the past thousand years), and of the French house of Orange. In the year following that of the execution of Charles I., the Prince of Orange suddenly died, and a few days later the Princess Mary gave birth to Prince William Henry, who inherited some of the best qualities of the houses of Nassau, Orange, Navarre, and Stuart, as well as some of their failings. In his younger days the Prince, whose mother soon died, was treated badly by the proud patricians who ruled the Confederacy, and who determined that he should not be allowed to fill the office of Stadtholder, to which he was by birth entitled. When he was scarcely fifteen the Arminian magistracy tore away from the young Calvinist all the domestics who enjoyed his confidence, which was one of the causes of his blunt rough manner in after life. But they could not keep him down. At the age of seventeen he was considered a sound statesman; at eighteen he sat among the fathers of the Commonwealth; at twenty-one he rose to the head of the administration; and at twenty-three he was renowned as a soldier and a politician. Macaulay says, "no person ever discovered what that thing was that the Prince of Orange feared." So strong was his belief in predestination, although not by any means a man of piety, that he would hardly take any precaution for his personal welfare, and when defeated he was as stoical as a Mohawk Chief.

While the Dutch statesmen were about to inaugurate a liberal commercial policy, and at the time De Ruyter was preparing to suppress the Barbary pirates, in a time of security and peace, Charles II., instigated by the French king, made a sudden and unexpected attack on the Smyrna fleet, and on the Dutch possessions on the coast of Guinea. All Christendom were surprised at the act, and the French followed it up by an attack upon the Netherlands with armies amounting to 200,000 men, to whom the Dutch could only oppose 20,000. The Republic was over-run as by a torrent, and the English fleet attempted to land troops in the heart of the wealthiest provinces. The Prince of Orange was raised to the position of Stadtholder, and the De Witts who resisted his elevation, were torn in pieces by an enraged mob. The Prince being raised to the position of Admiral-General, soon changed the aspect of affairs by his courage and ability, and the annals of the human race (Macaulay says) do not record any thing more heroic than the stand made by the Dutch on the occasion. The people broke up the dikes, flooded the country, and even women and children took their turn on the fortifications of the cities. In the engagements, where the Dutch were in almost every instance far out-numbered, it is recorded that women filled the bandeliers, and the children brought bullets to their parents. Wherever the allied armies gained a victory, it cost them a fearful price. William of Orange was calm and undaunted through it all. The two kings offered to make him sovereign of the United Provinces, if he would only yield. The young man replied, "My country trusts in me; I will not sacrifice it to my interests, but if need be die with it in the last ditch." At sea the Dutch with fifty-two ships engaged the allies with eighty, and the issue of the day was uncertain. In a second engagement the advantage was with the Dutch; and two months later the Dutch fought the English with great bravery, and unexampled fury, and the British ships retreated and were pursued. Charles, annoyed, retaliated on the Nonconformists at home, and revived his persecutions with vigor, giving as a reason that the sailors of the Dutch fleet were in part composed