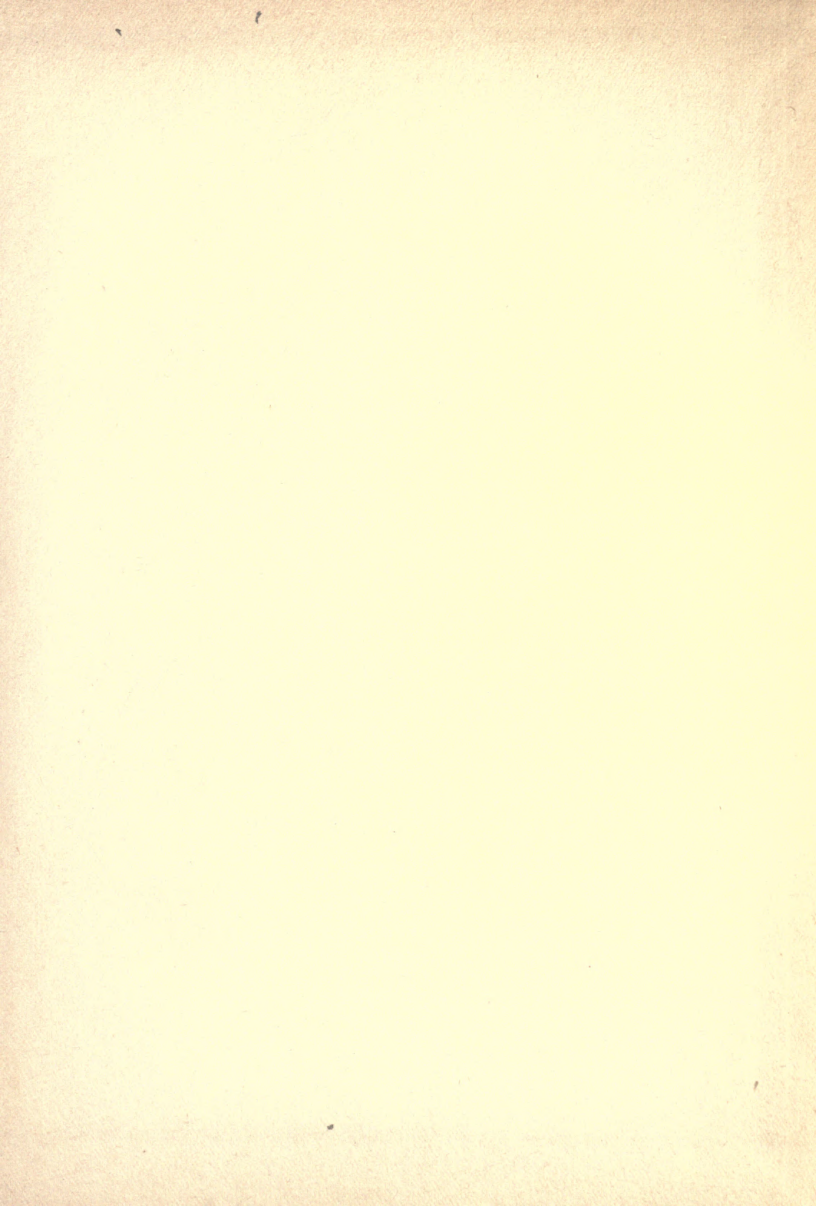




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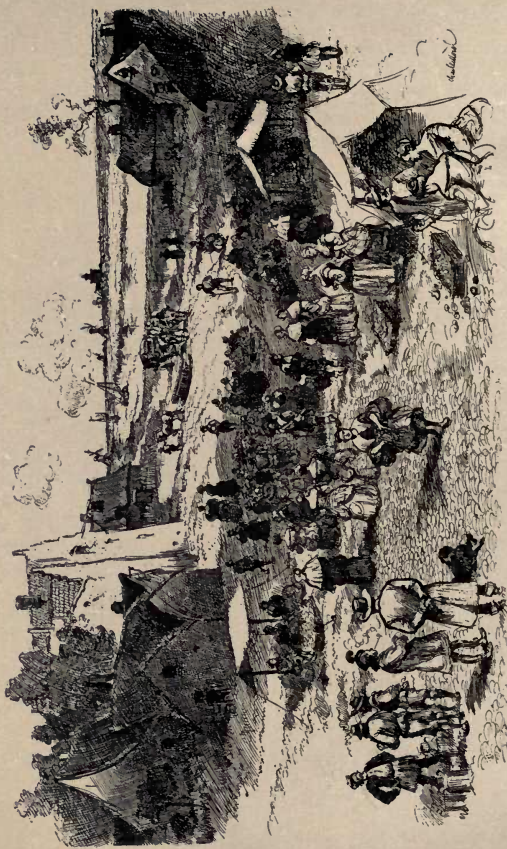




THE BLACK TULIP







THE MARKET AT GORCUM

*Dumas, Vol. Twenty-four*



THE WORKS OF  
ALEXANDRE DUMAS  
IN THIRTY VOLUMES



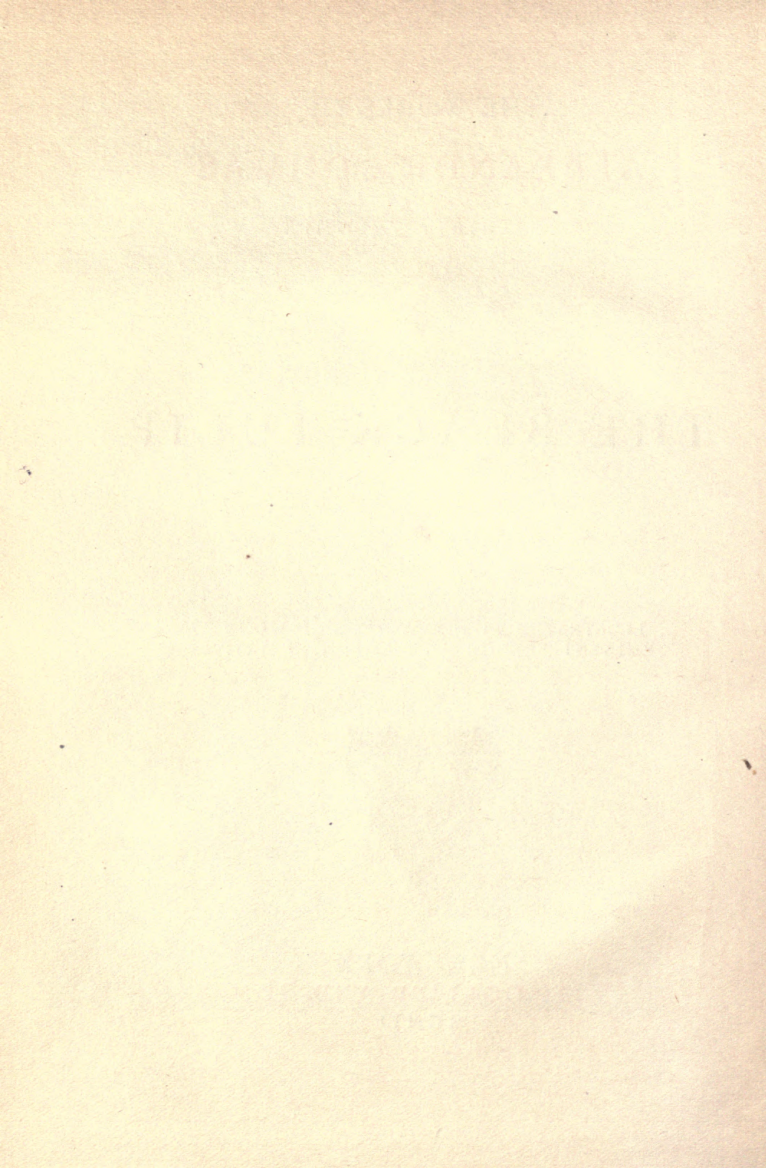
# THE BLACK TULIP



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# THE BLACK TULIP

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## CHAPTER I

### A GRATEFUL PEOPLE

ON THE 20th of August, 1672, the city of the Hague, always so lively, so neat, and so trim that one might believe every day to be Sunday, with its shady park, with its tall trees, spreading over its Gothic houses, with its canals like large mirrors, in which its steeples and its almost Eastern cupolas are reflected—the city of the Hague, the capital of the Seven United Provinces, was swelling in all its arteries with a black and red stream of hurried, panting, and restless citizens, who, with their knives in their girdles, muskets on their shoulders, or sticks in their hands, were pushing on to the Buytenhof, a terrible prison, the grated windows of which are still shown, where, on the charge of attempted murder preferred against him by the surgeon Tyckelaer, Cornelius de Witt, the brother of the Grand Pensionary of Holland, was confined.

If the history of that time, and especially that of the year in the middle of which our narrative commences, were not indissolubly connected with the two names just mentioned, the few explanatory pages which we are about to add might appear quite supererogatory; but we will, from the very first, apprise the reader—our old friend, to whom we are wont on the first page to promise amusement, and with whom we always try to keep our word as well as is in our power—that this explanation is as indispensable to the right understanding of our story as to that of the great event itself on which it is based.

Cornelius de Witt, Ruart de Pulten, that is to say, warden of the dikes, ex-burgomaster of Dort, his native town, and member of the Assembly of the States of Holland, was forty-nine years of age, when the Dutch people, tired of the Republic such as John de Witt, the Grand Pensionary of Holland, understood it, at once conceived a most violent affection for the Stadtholderate, which had been abolished forever in Holland by the "Perpetual Edict" forced by John de Witt upon the United Provinces.

As it rarely happens that public opinion, in its whimsical flights, does not identify a principle with a man, thus the people saw the personification of the Republic in the two stern figures of the brothers De Witt, those Romans of Holland, spurning to pander to the fancies of the mob, and

wedding themselves with unbending fidelity to liberty without licentiousness, and prosperity without the waste of superfluity; on the other hand, the Stadtholderate recalled to the popular mind the grave and thoughtful image of the young Prince William of Orange.

The brothers De Witt humored Louis XIV., whose moral influence was felt by the whole of Europe, and the pressure of whose material power Holland had been made to feel in that marvellous campaign on the Rhine which, in the space of three months, had laid the power of the United Provinces prostrate.

Louis XIV. had long been the enemy of the Dutch, who insulted or ridiculed him to their hearts' content, although it must be said that they generally used French refugees for the mouthpiece of their spite. Their national pride held him up as the Mithridates of the Republic. The brothers De Witt, therefore, had to strive against a double difficulty—against the force of national antipathy, and, besides, against the feeling of weariness which is natural to all vanquished people, when they hope that a new chief will be able to save them from ruin and shame.

This new chief, quite ready to appear on the political stage, and to measure himself against Louis XIV., however gigantic the fortunes of the Grand Monarch loomed in the future, was William, Prince of Orange, son of William II., and

grandson, by his mother Henrietta Stuart, of Charles I. of England. We have mentioned him before as the person by whom the people expected to see the office of Stadholder restored.

This young man was, in 1672, twenty-two years of age. John de Witt, who was his tutor, had brought him up with the view of making him a good citizen. Loving his country better than he did his disciple, the master had, by the Perpetual Edict, extinguished the hope which the young Prince might have entertained of one day becoming Stadholder. But God laughs at the presumption of man, who wants to raise and prostrate the powers on earth without consulting the King above; and the fickleness and caprice of the Dutch combined with the terror inspired by Louis XIV., in repealing the Perpetual Edict, and re-establishing the office of Stadholder in favor of William of Orange, for whom the hand of Providence had traced out ulterior destinies on the hidden map of the future.

The Grand Pensionary bowed before the will of his fellow citizens; Cornelius de Witt, however, was more obstinate, and notwithstanding all the threats of death from the Orangist rabble, who besieged him in his house at Dort, he stoutly refused to sign the act by which the office of Stadholder was restored. Moved by the tears and entreaties of his wife, he at last complied, only adding to his signature the two letters V. C. (V<sub>i</sub>)



*Coactus*), notifying thereby that he only yielded to force.

It was a real miracle that on that day he escaped from the doom intended for him.

John de Witt derived no advantage from his ready compliance with the wishes of his fellow citizens. Only a few days after, an attempt was made to stab him, in which he was severely although not mortally wounded.

This by no means suited the views of the Orange faction. The life of the two brothers being a constant obstacle to their plans, they changed their tactics, and tried to obtain by calumny what they had not been able to effect by the aid of the poniard.

How rarely does it happen that, in the right moment, a great man is found to head the execution of vast and noble designs; and for that reason, when such a providential concurrence of circumstances does occur, history is prompt to record the name of the chosen one, and to hold him up to the admiration of posterity. But when Satan interposes in human affairs to cast a shadow upon some happy existence, or to overthrow a kingdom, it seldom happens that he does not find at his side some miserable tool, in whose ear he has but to whisper a word to set him at once about his task.

The wretched tool who was at hand to be the agent of this dastardly plot was one Tyckelaer,

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