

Rise of the Dutch Republic, the — Volume 02: Introduction II eBook

Rise of the Dutch Republic, the — Volume 02: Introduction II by John Lothrop Motley

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VII.

Five centuries of isolation succeed. In the Netherlands, as throughout Europe, a thousand obscure and slender rills are slowly preparing the great stream of universal culture. Five dismal centuries of feudalism: during which period there is little talk of human right, little obedience to divine reason. Rights there are none, only forces; and, in brief, three great forces, gradually arising, developing themselves, acting upon each other, and upon the general movement of society.

The sword—the first, for a time the only force: the force of iron. The “land’s master,” having acquired the property in the territory and in the people who feed thereon, distributes to his subalterns, often but a shade beneath him in power, portions of his estate, getting the use of their faithful swords in return. Vavasours subdivide again to vassals, exchanging land and cattle, human or otherwise, against fealty, and so the iron chain of a military hierarchy, forged of mutually interdependent links, is stretched over each little province. Impregnable castles, here more numerous than in any other part of Christendom, dot the level surface of the country. Mail-clad knights, with their followers, encamp permanently upon the soil. The fortunate fable of divine right is invented to sanction the system; superstition and ignorance give currency to the delusion. Thus the grace of God, having conferred the property in a vast portion of Europe upon a certain idiot in France, makes him competent to sell large fragments of his estate, and to give a divine, and, therefore, most satisfactory title along with them. A great convenience to a man, who had neither power, wit, nor will to keep the property in his own hands. So the Dirks of Holland get a deed from Charles the Simple, and, although the grace of God does not prevent the royal grantor himself from dying a miserable, discrowned captive, the conveyance to Dirk is none the less hallowed by almighty fiat. So the Roberts and Guys, the Johns and Baldwins, become sovereigns in Hainault, Brabant, Flanders and other little districts, affecting supernatural sanction for the authority which their good swords have won and are ever ready to maintain. Thus organized, the force of iron asserts and exerts itself. Duke, count, seignor and vassal, knight and squire, master and man swarm and struggle amain. A wild, chaotic, sanguinary scene. Here, bishop and baron contend, centuries long, murdering human creatures by ten thousands for an acre or two of swampy pasture; there, doughty families, hugging old musty quarrels to their heart, buffet each other from generation to generation; thus they go on, raging and wrestling among themselves, with all the world, shrieking insane war-cries which no human soul ever understood—red caps and black, white hoods and grey, Hooks and Kabbeljaws, dealing destruction, building castles and burning them, tilting

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at tourneys, stealing bullocks, roasting Jews, robbing the highways, crusading—now upon Syrian sands against Paynim dogs, now in Frisian quagmires against Albigenses, Stedingers, and other heretics— plunging about in blood and fire, repenting, at idle times, and paying their passage through, purgatory with large slices of ill-gotten gains placed in the ever-extended dead-hand of the Church; acting, on the whole, according to their kind, and so getting themselves civilized or exterminated, it matters little which. Thus they play their part, those energetic men-at-arms; and thus one great force, the force of iron, spins and expands itself, century after century, helping on, as it whirls, the great progress of society towards its goal, wherever that may be.

Another force—the force clerical—the power of clerks, arises; the might of educated mind measuring itself against brute violence; a force embodied, as often before, as priestcraft—the strength of priests: craft meaning, simply, strength, in our old mother-tongue. This great force, too, develops itself variously, being sometimes beneficent, sometimes malignant. Priesthood works out its task, age after age: now smoothing penitent death-beds, consecrating graves! feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, incarnating the Christian precepts, in an, age of rapine and homicide, doing a thousand deeds of love and charity among the obscure and forsaken—deeds of which there shall never be human chronicle, but a leaf or two, perhaps, in the recording angel's book; hiving precious honey from the few flowers of gentle, art which bloom upon a howling wilderness; holding up the light of science over a stormy sea; treasuring in convents and crypts the few fossils of antique learning which become visible, as the extinct Megatherium of an elder world reappears after the gothic deluge; and now, careering in helm and hauberk with the other ruffians, bandying blows in the thickest of the fight, blasting with bell, book, and candle its trembling enemies, while sovereigns, at the head of armies, grovel in the dust and offer abject submission for the kiss of peace; exercising the same conjury over ignorant baron and cowardly hind, making the fiction of apostolic authority to bind and loose, as prolific in acres as the other divine right to have and hold; thus the force of cultivated intellect, wielded by a chosen few and sanctioned by supernatural authority, becomes as potent as the sword.

A third force, developing itself more slowly, becomes even more potent than the rest: the power of gold. Even iron yields to the more ductile metal. The importance of municipalities, enriched by trade, begins to be felt. Commerce, the mother of Netherland freedom, and, eventually, its destroyer—even as in all human history the vivifying becomes afterwards the dissolving principle—commerce changes insensibly and miraculously the aspect of society. Clusters of hovels become towered cities; the green

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and gilded Hanse of commercial republicanism coils itself around the decaying trunk of feudal despotism. Cities leagued with cities throughout and beyond Christendom-empire within empire-bind themselves closer and closer in the electric chain of human sympathy and grow stronger and stronger by mutual support. Fishermen and river raftsmen become ocean adventurers and merchant princes. Commerce plucks up half-drowned Holland by the locks and pours gold into her lap. Gold wrests power from iron. Needy Flemish weavers become mighty manufacturers. Armies of workmen, fifty thousand strong, tramp through the swarming streets. Silk-makers, clothiers, brewers become the gossips of kings, lend their royal gossips vast sums and burn the royal notes of hand in fires of cinnamon wood. Wealth brings strength, strength confidence. Learning to handle cross-bow and dagger, the burghers fear less the baronial sword, finding that their own will cut as well, seeing that great armies—flowers of chivalry—can ride away before them fast enough at battles of spurs and other encounters. Sudden riches beget insolence, tumults, civic broils. Internecine quarrels, horrible tumults stain the streets with blood, but education lifts the citizens more and more out of the original slough. They learn to tremble as little at priestcraft as at swordcraft, having acquired something of each. Gold in the end, unsanctioned by right divine, weighs up the other forces, supernatural as they are. And so, struggling along their appointed path, making cloth, making money, making treaties with great kingdoms, making war by land and sea, ringing great bells, waving great banners, they, too—these insolent, boisterous burghers—accomplish their work. Thus, the mighty power of the purse develops itself and municipal liberty becomes a substantial fact. A fact, not a principle; for the old theorem of sovereignty remains undisputed as ever. Neither the nation, in mass, nor the citizens, in class, lay claim to human rights. All upper attributes—legislative, judicial, administrative—remain in the land-master's breast alone. It is an absurdity, therefore, to argue with Grotius concerning the unknown antiquity of the Batavian republic. The republic never existed at all till the sixteenth century, and was only born after long years of agony. The democratic instincts of the ancient German savages were to survive in the breasts of their cultivated descendants, but an organized, civilized, republican polity had never existed. The cities, as they grew in strength, never claimed the right to make the laws or to share in the government. As a matter of fact, they did make the laws, and shared, beside, in most important functions of sovereignty, in the treaty-making power, especially. Sometimes by bargains; sometimes by blood, by gold, threats, promises, or good hard blows they extorted their charters. Their codes, statutes, joyful entrances, and other constitutions

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were dictated by the burghers and sworn to by the monarch. They were concessions from above; privileges private laws; fragments indeed of a larger liberty, but vastly, better than the slavery for which they had been substituted; solid facts instead of empty abstractions, which, in those practical and violent days, would have yielded little nutriment; but they still rather sought to reconcile themselves, by a rough, clumsy fiction, with the hierarchy which they had invaded, than to overturn the system. Thus the cities, not regarding themselves as representatives or aggregations of the people, became fabulous personages, bodies without souls, corporations which had acquired vitality and strength enough to assert their existence. As persons, therefore—gigantic individualities—they wheeled into the feudal ranks and assumed feudal powers and responsibilities. The city of Dort; of Middelburg, of Ghent, of Louvain, was a living being, doing fealty, claiming service, bowing to its lord, struggling with its equals, trampling upon its slaves.

Thus, in these obscure provinces, as throughout Europe, in a thousand remote and isolated corners, civilization builds itself up, synthetically and slowly; yet at last, a whole is likely to get itself constructed. Thus, impelled by great and conflicting forces, now obliquely, now backward, now upward, yet, upon the whole, onward, the new Society moves along its predestined orbit, gathering consistency and strength as it goes. Society, civilization, perhaps, but hardly humanity. The people has hardly begun to extricate itself from the clods in which it lies buried. There are only nobles, priests, and, latterly, cities. In the northern Netherlands, the degraded condition of the mass continued longest. Even in Friesland, liberty, the dearest blessing of the ancient Frisians, had been forfeited in a variety of ways. Slavery was both voluntary and compulsory. Paupers sold themselves that they might escape starvation. The timid sold themselves that they might escape violence. These voluntary sales, which were frequent, wore usually made to cloisters and ecclesiastical establishments, for the condition of Church-slaves was preferable to that of other serfs. Persons worsted in judicial duels, shipwrecked sailors, vagrants, strangers, criminals unable to pay the money-bote imposed upon them, were all deprived of freedom; but the prolific source of slavery was war. Prisoners were almost universally reduced to servitude. A free woman who intermarried with a slave condemned herself and offspring to perpetual bondage. Among the Ripuarian Franks, a free woman thus disgracing herself, was girt with a sword and a distaff. Choosing the one, she was to strike her husband dead; choosing the other, she adopted the symbol of slavery, and became a chattel for life.

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The ferocious inroads of the Normans scared many weak and timid persons into servitude. They fled, by throngs, to church and monastery, and were happy, by enslaving themselves, to escape the more terrible bondage of the sea-kings. During the brief dominion of the Norman Godfrey, every free Frisian was forced to wear a halter around his neck. The lot of a Church-slave was freedom in comparison. To kill him was punishable by a heavy fine. He could give testimony in court, could inherit, could make a will, could even plead before the law, if law could be found. The number of slaves throughout the Netherlands was very large; the number belonging to the bishopric of Utrecht, enormous.

The condition of those belonging to laymen was much more painful. The *Lyf-eigene*, or absolute slaves, were the most wretched. They were mere brutes. They had none of the natural attributes of humanity, their life and death were in the master's hands, they had no claim to a fraction of their own labor or its fruits, they had no marriage, except under condition of the infamous '*jus primoe noctis*'. The villagers, or villeins, were the second class and less forlorn. They could commute the labor due to their owner by a fixed sum of money, after annual payment of which, the villein worked for himself. His master, therefore, was not his absolute proprietor. The chattel had a beneficial interest in a portion of his own flesh and blood.

The crusades made great improvement in the condition of the serfs. He who became a soldier of the cross was free upon his return, and many were adventurous enough to purchase liberty at so honorable a price. Many others were sold or mortgaged by the crusading knights, desirous of converting their property into gold, before embarking upon their enterprise. The purchasers or mortgagees were in general churches and convents, so that the slaves, thus alienated, obtained at least a preferable servitude. The place of the absent serfs was supplied by free labor, so that agricultural and mechanical occupations, now devolving upon a more elevated class, became less degrading, and, in process of time, opened an ever-widening sphere for the industry and progress of freemen. Thus a people began to exist. It was, however; a miserable people, with personal, but no civil rights whatever. Their condition, although better than servitude, was almost desperate. They were taxed beyond their ability, while priest and noble were exempt. They had no voice in the apportionment of the money thus contributed. There was no redress against the lawless violence to which they were perpetually exposed. In the manorial courts, the criminal sat in judgment upon his victim. The functions of highwayman and magistrate were combined in one individual.

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By degrees, the class of freemen, artisans, traders, and the like, becoming the more numerous, built stronger and better houses outside the castle gates of the “land’s master” or the burghs of the more powerful nobles. The superiors, anxious to increase their own importance, favored the progress of the little boroughs. The population, thus collected, began to divide themselves into guilds. These were soon afterwards erected by the community into bodies corporate; the establishment of the community, of course, preceding, the incorporation of the guilds. Those communities were created by charters or Keuren, granted by the sovereign. Unless the earliest concessions of this nature have perished, the town charters of Holland or Zeland are nearly a century later than those of Flanders, France, and England.

The oldest Keur, or act of municipal incorporation, in the provinces afterwards constituting the republic, was that granted by Count William the First of Holland and Countess Joanna of Flanders, as joint proprietors of Walcheren, to the town of Middelburg. It will be seen that its main purport is to promise, as a special privilege to this community, law, in place of the arbitrary violence by which mankind, in general, were governed by their betters.

“The inhabitants,” ran the Charter, “are taken into protection by both counts. Upon fighting, maiming, wounding, striking, scolding; upon peace-breaking, upon resistance to peace-makers and to the judgment of Schepens; upon contemning the Ban, upon selling spoiled wine, and upon other misdeeds fines are imposed for behoof of the Count, the city, and sometimes of the Schepens.....To all Middelburgers one kind of law is guaranteed. Every man must go to law before the Schepens. If any one being summoned and present in Walcheren does not appear, or refuses submission to sentence, he shall be banished with confiscation of property. Schout or Schepen denying justice to a complainant, shall, until reparation, hold no tribunal again.....A burgher having a dispute with an outsider (buiten mann) must summon him before the Schepens. An appeal lies from the Schepens to the Count. No one can testify but a householder. All alienation of real estate must take place before the Schepens. If an outsider has a complaint against a burgher, the Schepens and Schout must arrange it. If either party refuses submission to them, they must ring the town bell and summon an assembly of all the burghers to compel him. Any one ringing the town bell, except by general consent, and any one not appearing when it tolls, are liable to a fine. No Middelburger can be arrested or held in durance within Flanders or Holland, except for crime.”

This document was signed, sealed, and sworn to by the two sovereigns in the year 1217. It was the model upon which many other communities, cradles of great cities, in Holland and Zeland, were afterwards created.

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These charters are certainly not very extensive, even for the privileged municipalities which obtained them, when viewed from an abstract stand-point. They constituted, however, a very great advance from the stand-point at which humanity actually found itself. They created, not for all inhabitants, but for great numbers of them, the right, not to govern them selves but to be governed by law: They furnished a local administration of justice. They provided against arbitrary imprisonment. They set up tribunals, where men of burgher class were to sit in judgment. They held up a shield against arbitrary violence from above and sedition from within. They encouraged peace-makers, punished peace-breakers. They guarded the fundamental principle, 'ut sua tanerent', to the verge of absurdity; forbidding a freeman, without a freehold, from testifying— a capacity not denied even to a country slave. Certainly all this was better than fist-law and courts manorial. For the commencement of the thirteenth century, it was progress.

The Schout and Schepens, or chief magistrate and aldermen, were originally appointed by the sovereign. In process of time, the election of these municipal authorities was conceded to the communities. This inestimable privilege, however, after having been exercised during a certain period by the whole body of citizens, was eventually monopolized by the municipal government itself, acting in common with the deans of the various guilds.

Thus organized and inspired with the breath of civic life, the communities of Flanders and Holland began to move rapidly forward. More and more they assumed the appearance of prosperous little republics. For this prosperity they were indebted to commerce, particularly with England and the Baltic nations, and to manufactures, especially of wool.

The trade between England and the Netherlands had existed for ages, and was still extending itself, to the great advantage of both countries. A dispute, however, between the merchants of Holland and England, towards the year 1215, caused a privateering warfare, and a ten years' suspension of intercourse. A reconciliation afterwards led to the establishment of the English wool staple, at Dort. A subsequent quarrel deprived Holland of this great advantage. King Edward refused to assist Count Florence in a war with the Flemings, and transferred the staple from Dort to Bruges and Mechlin.

The trade of the Netherlands with the Mediterranean and the East was mainly through this favored city of Bruges, which, already in the thirteenth century, had risen to the first rank in the commercial world. It was the resting-place for the Lombards and other Italians, the great entrepot for their merchandise. It now became, in addition, the great marketplace for English wool, and the woollen fabrics of all the Netherlands, as well as for the drugs and spices of the East. It had, however, by no means reached its apogee, but was to culminate with Venice, and to sink with her decline. When the overland Indian trade fell off with the discovery of the Cape passage, both cities withered. Grass grew in the fair and pleasant streets of Bruges, and sea-weed clustered about the

marble halls of Venice. At this epoch, however, both were in a state of rapid and insolent prosperity.

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The cities, thus advancing in wealth and importance, were no longer satisfied with being governed according to law, and began to participate, not only in their own, but in the general government. Under Guy of Flanders, the towns appeared regularly, as well as the nobles, in the assembly of the provincial estates. (1386-1389, A.D.) In the course of the following century, the six chief cities, or capitals, of Holland (Dort, Harlem, Delft, Leyden, Goads, and Amsterdam) acquired the right of sending their deputies regularly to the estates of the provinces. These towns, therefore, with the nobles, constituted the parliamentary power of the nation. They also acquired letters patent from the count, allowing them to choose their burgomasters and a limited number of councillors or senators (Vroedschappen).

Thus the liberties of Holland and Flanders waxed, daily, stronger. A great physical convulsion in the course of the thirteenth century came to add its influence to the slower process of political revolution. Hitherto there had been but one Friesland, including Holland, and nearly all the territory of the future republic. A slender stream alone separated the two great districts. The low lands along the Vlie, often threatened, at last sank in the waves. The German Ocean rolled in upon the inland Lake of Flevo. The stormy Zuyder Zee began its existence by engulfing thousands of Frisian villages, with all their population, and by spreading a chasm between kindred peoples. The political, as well as the geographical, continuity of the land was obliterated by this tremendous deluge. The Hollanders were cut off from their relatives in the east by as dangerous a sea as that which divided them from their Anglo-Saxon brethren in Britain. The deputies to the general assemblies at Aurich could no longer undertake a journey grown so perilous. West Friesland became absorbed in Holland. East Friesland remained a federation of rude but self-governed maritime provinces, until the brief and bloody dominion of the Saxon dukes led to the establishment of Charles the Fifth's authority. Whatever the nominal sovereignty over them, this most republican tribe of Netherlanders, or of Europeans, had never accepted feudalism. There was an annual congress of the whole confederacy. Each of the seven little states, on the other hand, regulated its own internal affairs. Each state was subdivided into districts, each district governed by a Griet-mann (greatman, selectman) and assistants. Above all these district officers was a Podesta, a magistrate identical, in name and functions, with the chief officer of the Italian republics. There was sometimes but one Podesta; sometimes one for each province. He was chosen by the people, took oath of fidelity to the separate estates, or, if Podesta-general, to the federal diet, and was generally elected for a limited term, although sometimes for life. He was assisted by a board of eighteen or twenty councillors. The deputies to the general congress were chosen by popular suffrage in Easter-week. The clergy were not recognized as a political estate.

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Thus, in those lands which a niggard nature had apparently condemned to perpetual poverty and obscurity, the principle of reasonable human freedom, without which there is no national prosperity or glory worth contending for, was taking deepest and strongest root. Already in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Friesland was a republic, except in name; Holland, Flanders, Brabant, had acquired a large share of self-government. The powerful commonwealth, at a later period to be evolved out of the great combat between centralized tyranny and the spirit of civil and religious liberty, was already foreshadowed. The elements, of which that important republic was to be compounded, were germinating for centuries. Love of freedom, readiness to strike and bleed at any moment in her cause, manly resistance to despotism, however overshadowing, were the leading characteristics of the race in all regions or periods, whether among Frisian swamps, Dutch dykes, the gentle hills and dales of England, or the pathless forests of America. Doubtless, the history of human liberty in Holland and Flanders, as every where else upon earth where there has been such a history, unrolls many scenes of turbulence and bloodshed; although these features have been exaggerated by prejudiced historians. Still, if there were luxury and insolence, sedition and uproar, at any rate there was life. Those violent little commonwealths had blood in their veins. They were compact of proud, self-helping, muscular vigor. The most sanguinary tumults which they ever enacted in the face of day, were better than the order and silence born of the midnight darkness of despotism. That very unruliness was educating the people for their future work. Those merchants, manufacturers, country squires, and hard-fighting barons, all pent up in a narrow corner of the earth, quarrelling with each other and with all the world for centuries, were keeping alive a national pugnacity of character, for which there was to be a heavy demand in the sixteenth century, and without which the fatherland had perhaps succumbed in the most unequal conflict ever waged by man against oppression.

To sketch the special history of even the leading Netherland provinces, during the five centuries which we have thus rapidly sought to characterize, is foreign to our purpose. By holding the clue of Holland's history, the general maze of dynastic transformations throughout the country may, however, be swiftly threaded. From the time of the first Dirk to the close of the thirteenth century there were nearly four hundred years of unbroken male descent, a long line of Dirks and Florences. This iron-handed, hot-headed, adventurous race, placed as sovereign upon its little sandy hook, making ferocious exertions to swell into larger consequence, conquering a mile or two of morass or barren furze, after harder blows and bloodier encounters than might have established an empire under more favorable circumstances, at last dies out. The courtship

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falls to the house of Avennes, Counts of Hainault. Holland, together with Zeland, which it had annexed, is thus joined to the province of Hainault. At the end of another half century the Hainault line expires. William the Fourth died childless in 1355. His death is the signal for the outbreak of an almost interminable series of civil commotions. Those two great parties, known by the uncouth names of Hook and Kabbeljaw, come into existence, dividing noble against noble, city against city, father against son, for some hundred and fifty years, without foundation upon any abstract or intelligible principle. It may be observed, however, that, in the sequel, and as a general rule, the Kabbeljaw, or cod-fish party, represented the city or municipal faction, while the Hooks (fish-hooks), that were to catch and control them, were the nobles; iron and audacity against brute number and weight.

Duke William of Bavaria, sister's son—of William the Fourth, gets himself established in 1354. He is succeeded by his brother Albert; Albert by his son William. William, who had married Margaret of Burgundy, daughter of Philip the Bold, dies in 1417. The goodly heritage of these three Netherland provinces descends to his daughter Jacqueline, a damsel of seventeen. Little need to trace the career of the fair and ill-starred Jacqueline. Few chapters of historical romance have drawn more frequent tears. The favorite heroine of ballad and drama, to Netherlanders she is endued with the palpable form and perpetual existence of the Iphigenias, Mary Stuarts, Joans of Arc, or other consecrated individualities. Exhausted and broken-hearted, after thirteen years of conflict with her own kinsmen, consoled for the cowardice and brutality of three husbands by the gentle and knightly spirit of the fourth, dispossessed of her father's broad domains, degraded from the rank of sovereign to be lady forester of her own provinces by her cousin, the bad Duke of Burgundy, Philip surnamed "the Good," she dies at last, and the good cousin takes undisputed dominion of the land. (1437.)

The five centuries of isolation are at end. The many obscure streams of Netherland history are merged in one broad current. Burgundy has absorbed all the provinces which, once more, are forced to recognize a single master. A century and a few years more succeed, during which this house and its heirs are undisputed sovereigns of the soil.

Philip the Good had already acquired the principal Netherlands, before dispossessing Jacqueline. He had inherited, beside the two Burgundies, the counties of Flanders and Artois. He had purchased the county of Namur, and had usurped the duchy of Brabant, to which the duchy of Limburg, the marquisate of Antwerp, and the barony of Mechlin, had already been annexed. By his assumption of Jacqueline's dominions, he was now lord of Holland, Zeland, and Hainault, and titular master of Friesland. He acquired Luxemburg a few years later.

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Lord of so many opulent cities and fruitful provinces, he felt himself equal to the kings of Europe. Upon his marriage with Isabella of Portugal, he founded, at Bruges, the celebrated order of the Golden Fleece. What could be more practical or more devout than the conception? Did not the Lamb of God, suspended at each knightly breast, symbolize at once the woollen fabrics to which so much of Flemish wealth and Burgundian power was owing, and the gentle humility of Christ, which was ever to characterize the order? Twenty-five was the limited number, including Philip himself, as grand master. The chevaliers were emperors, kings, princes, and the most illustrious nobles of Christendom; while a leading provision, at the outset, forbade the brethren, crowned heads excepted, to accept or retain the companionship of any other order.

The accession of so potent and ambitious a prince as the good Philip boded evil to the cause of freedom in the Netherlands. The spirit of liberty seemed to have been typified in the fair form of the benignant and unhappy Jacqueline, and to be buried in her grave. The usurper, who had crushed her out of existence, now strode forward to trample upon all the laws and privileges of the provinces which had formed her heritage.

At his advent, the municipal power had already reached an advanced stage of development. The burgher class controlled the government, not only of the cities, but often of the provinces, through its influence in the estates. Industry and wealth had produced their natural results. The supreme authority of the sovereign and the power of the nobles were balanced by the municipal principle which had even begun to preponderate over both. All three exercised a constant and salutary check upon each other. Commerce had converted slaves into freemen, freemen into burghers, and the burghers were acquiring daily, a larger practical hold upon the government. The town councils were becoming almost omnipotent. Although with an oligarchical tendency, which at a later period was to be more fully developed, they were now composed of large numbers of individuals, who had raised themselves, by industry and intelligence, out of the popular masses. There was an unquestionably republican tone to the institutions. Power, actually, if not nominally, was in the hands of many who had achieved the greatness to which they had not been born.

The assemblies of the estates were rather diplomatic than representative. They consisted, generally, of the nobles and of the deputations from the cities. In Holland, the clergy had neither influence nor seats in the parliamentary body. Measures were proposed by the stadholder, who represented the sovereign. A request, for example, of pecuniary accommodation, was made by that functionary or by the count himself in person. The nobles then voted upon the demand, generally as one body, but sometimes by heads. The measure was then laid before the burghers.

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If they had been specially commissioned to act upon the matter; they voted, each city as a city, not each deputy, individually. If they had received no instructions, they took back the proposition to lay before the councils of their respective cities, in order to return a decision at an adjourned session, or at a subsequent diet. It will be seen, therefore, that the principle of national, popular representation was but imperfectly developed. The municipal deputies acted only under instructions. Each city was a little independent state, suspicious not only of the sovereign and nobles, but of its sister cities. This mutual jealousy hastened the general humiliation now impending. The centre of the system waging daily more powerful, it more easily unsphered these feeble and mutually repulsive bodies.

Philip's first step, upon assuming the government, was to issue a declaration, through the council of Holland, that the privileges and constitutions, which he had sworn to as Ruward, or guardian, during the period in which Jacqueline had still retained a nominal sovereignty, were to be considered null and void, unless afterwards confirmed by him as count. At a single blow he thus severed the whole knot of pledges, oaths and other political complications, by which he had entangled himself during his cautious advance to power. He was now untrammelled again. As the conscience of the smooth usurper was, thenceforth, the measure of provincial liberty, his subjects soon found it meted to them more sparingly than they wished. From this point, then, through the Burgundian period, and until the rise of the republic, the liberty of the Netherlands, notwithstanding several brilliant but brief laminations, occurring at irregular intervals, seemed to remain in almost perpetual eclipse.

The material prosperity of the country had, however, vastly increased. The fisheries of Holland had become of enormous importance. The invention of the humble Beukelzoon of Biervliet, had expanded into a mine of wealth. The fisheries, too, were most useful as a nursery of seamen, and were already indicating Holland's future naval supremacy. The fishermen were the militia of the ocean, their prowess attested in the war with the Hanseatic cities, which the provinces of Holland and Zeland, in Philip's name, but by their own unassisted exertions, carried on triumphantly at this epoch. Then came into existence that race of cool and daring mariners, who, in after times, were to make the Dutch name illustrious throughout the world, the men, whose fierce descendants, the "beggars of the sea," were to make the Spanish empire tremble, the men, whose later successors swept the seas with brooms at the mast-head, and whose ocean-battles with their equally fearless English brethren often lasted four uninterrupted days and nights.

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The main strength of Holland was derived from the ocean, from whose destructive grasp she had wrested herself, but in whose friendly embrace she remained. She was already placing securely the foundations of commercial wealth and civil liberty upon those shifting quicksands which the Roman doubted whether to call land or water. Her submerged deformity, as she floated, mermaid-like, upon the waves was to be forgotten in her material splendor. Enriched with the spoils of every clime, crowned with the divine jewels of science and art, she was, one day, to sing a siren song of freedom, luxury, and power.

As with Holland, so with Flanders, Brabant, and the other leading provinces. Industry and wealth, agriculture, commerce, and manufactures, were constantly augmenting. The natural sources of power were full to overflowing, while the hand of despotism was deliberately sealing the fountain.

For the house of Burgundy was rapidly culminating and as rapidly curtailing the political privileges of the Netherlands. The contest was, at first, favorable to the cause of arbitrary power; but little seeds were silently germinating, which, in the progress of their gigantic development, were, one day, to undermine the foundations of Tyranny and to overshadow the world. The early progress of the religious reformation in the Netherlands will be outlined in a separate chapter. Another great principle was likewise at work at this period. At the very epoch when the greatness of Burgundy was most swiftly ripening, another weapon was secretly forging, more potent in the great struggle for freedom than any which the wit or hand of man has ever devised or wielded. When Philip the Good, in the full blaze of his power, and flushed with the triumphs of territorial aggrandizement, was instituting at Bruges the order of the Golden Fleece, "to the glory of God, of the blessed Virgin, and of the holy Andrew, patron saint of the Burgundian family," and enrolling the names of the kings and princes who were to be honored with its symbols, at that very moment, an obscure citizen of Harlem, one Lorenz Coster, or Lawrence the Sexton, succeeded in printing a little grammar, by means of movable types. The invention of printing was accomplished, but it was not ushered in with such a blaze of glory as heralded the contemporaneous erection of the Golden Fleece. The humble setter of types did not deem emperors and princes alone worthy his companionship. His invention sent no thrill of admiration throughout Christendom; and yet, what was the good Philip of Burgundy, with his Knights of the Golden Fleece, and all their effulgent trumpery, in the eye of humanity and civilization, compared with the poor sexton and his wooden types?

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[The question of the time and place to which the invention of printing should be referred, has been often discussed. It is not probable that it will ever be settled to the entire satisfaction of Holland and Germany. The Dutch claim that movable types were first used at Harlem, fixing the time variously between the years 1423 and 1440. The first and very faulty editions of Lorenz are religiously preserved at Harlem.]

Philip died in February, 1467. The details of his life and career do not belong to our purpose. The practical tendency of his government was to repress the spirit of liberty, while especial privileges, extensive in nature, but limited in time, were frequently granted to corporations. Philip, in one day, conferred thirty charters upon as many different bodies of citizens. These were, however, grants of monopoly not concessions of rights. He also fixed the number of city councils or *Vroedschappen* in many Netherland cities, giving them permission to present a double list of candidates for burgomasters and judges, from which he himself made the appointments. He was certainly neither a good nor great prince, but he possessed much administrative ability. His military talents were considerable, and he was successful in his wars. He was an adroit dissembler, a practical politician. He had the sense to comprehend that the power of a prince, however absolute, must depend upon the prosperity of his subjects. He taxed severely the wealth, but he protected the commerce and the manufactures of Holland and Flanders. He encouraged art, science, and literature. The brothers, John and Hubert Van Eyck, were attracted by his generosity to Bruges, where they painted many pictures. John was even a member of the duke's council. The art of oil-painting was carried to great perfection by Hubert's scholar, John of Bruges. An incredible number of painters, of greater or less merit, flourished at this epoch in the Netherlands, heralds of that great school, which, at a subsequent period, was to astonish the world with brilliant colors; profound science, startling effects, and vigorous reproductions of Nature. Authors, too, like Olivier de la Marche and Philippe de Comines, who, in the words of the latter, "wrote, not for the amusement of brutes, and people of low degree, but for princes and other persons of quality," these and other writers, with aims as lofty, flourished at the court of Burgundy, and were rewarded by the Duke with princely generosity. Philip remodelled and befriended the university of Louvain. He founded at Brussels the Burgundian library, which became celebrated throughout Europe. He levied largely, spent profusely, but was yet so thrifty a housekeeper, as to leave four hundred thousand crowns of gold, a vast amount in those days, besides three million marks' worth of plate and furniture, to be wasted like water in the insane career of his son.

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The exploits of that son require but few words of illustration. Hardly a chapter of European history or romance is more familiar to the world than the one which records the meteoric course of Charles the Bold. The propriety of his title was never doubtful. No prince was ever bolder, but it is certain that no quality could be less desirable, at that particular moment in the history of his house. It was not the quality to confirm a usurping family in its ill-gotten possessions. Renewed aggressions upon the rights of others justified retaliation and invited attack. Justice, prudence, firmness, wisdom of internal administration were desirable in the son of Philip and the rival of Louis. These attributes the gladiator lacked entirely. His career might have been a brilliant one in the old days of chivalry. His image might have appeared as imposing as the romantic forms of Baldwin Bras de Fer or Godfrey of Bouillon, had he not been misplaced in history. Nevertheless, he imagined himself governed by a profound policy. He had one dominant idea, to make Burgundy a kingdom. From the moment when, with almost the first standing army known to history, and with coffers well filled by his cautious father's economy, he threw himself into the lists against the crafty Louis, down to the day when he was found dead, naked, deserted, and with his face frozen into a pool of blood and water, he faithfully pursued this thought. His ducal cap was to be exchanged for a kingly crown, while all the provinces which lay beneath the Mediterranean and the North Sea, and between France and Germany, were to be united under his sceptre. The Netherlands, with their wealth, had been already appropriated, and their freedom crushed. Another land of liberty remained; physically, the reverse of Holland, but stamped with the same courageous nationality, the same ardent love of human rights. Switzerland was to be conquered. Her eternal battlements of ice and granite were to constitute the great bulwark of his realm. The world knows well the result of the struggle between the lord of so many duchies and earldoms, and the Alpine mountaineers. With all his boldness, Charles was but an indifferent soldier. His only merit was physical courage. He imagined himself a consummate commander, and, in conversation with his jester, was fond of comparing himself to Hannibal. "We are getting well Hannibalized to-day, my lord," said the bitter fool, as they rode off together from the disastrous defeat of Gransen. Well "Hannibalized" he was, too, at Gransen, at Murten, and at Nancy. He followed in the track of his prototype only to the base of the mountains.

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As a conqueror, he was signally unsuccessful; as a politician, he could out-wit none but himself; it was only as a tyrant within his own ground, that he could sustain the character which he chose to enact. He lost the crown, which he might have secured, because he thought the emperor's son unworthy the heiress of Burgundy; and yet, after his father's death, her marriage with that very Maximilian alone secured the possession of her paternal inheritance. Unsuccessful in schemes of conquest, and in political intrigue, as an oppressor of the Netherlands, he nearly carried out his plans. Those provinces he regarded merely as a bank to draw upon. His immediate intercourse with the country was confined to the extortion of vast requests. These were granted with ever-increasing reluctance, by the estates. The new taxes and excises, which the sanguinary extravagance of the duke rendered necessary, could seldom be collected in the various cities without tumults, sedition, and bloodshed. Few princes were ever a greater curse to the people whom they were allowed to hold as property. He nearly succeeded in establishing a centralized despotism upon the ruins of the provincial institutions. His sudden death alone deferred the catastrophe. His removal of the supreme court of Holland from the Hague to Mechlin, and his maintenance of a standing army, were the two great measures by which he prostrated the Netherlands. The tribunal had been remodelled by his father; the expanded authority which Philip had given to a bench of judges dependent upon himself, was an infraction of the rights of Holland. The court, however, still held its sessions in the country; and the sacred privilege—*de non evocando*—the right of every Hollander to be tried in his own land, was, at least, retained. Charles threw off the mask; he proclaimed that this council—composed of his creatures, holding office at his pleasure—should have supreme jurisdiction over all the charters of the provinces; that it was to follow his person, and derive all authority from his will. The usual seat of the court he transferred to Mechlin. It will be seen, in the sequel, that the attempt, under Philip the Second, to enforce its supreme authority was a collateral cause of the great revolution of the Netherlands.

Charles, like his father, administered the country by stadholders. From the condition of flourishing self-ruled little republics, which they had, for a moment, almost attained, they became departments of an ill-assorted, ill-conditioned, ill-governed realm, which was neither commonwealth nor empire, neither kingdom nor duchy; and which had no homogeneousness of population, no affection between ruler and people, small sympathies of lineage or of language.

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His triumphs were but few, his fall ignominious. His father's treasure was squandered, the curse of a standing army fixed upon his people, the trade and manufactures of the country paralyzed by his extortions, and he accomplished nothing. He lost his life in the forty-fourth year of his age (1477), leaving all the provinces, duchies, and lordships, which formed the miscellaneous realm of Burgundy, to his only child, the Lady Mary. Thus already the countries which Philip had wrested from the feeble hand of Jacqueline, had fallen to another female. Philip's own granddaughter, as young, fair, and unprotected as Jacqueline, was now sole mistress of those broad domains.

VIII.

A crisis, both for Burgundy and the Netherlands, succeeds. Within the provinces there is an elastic rebound, as soon as the pressure is removed from them by the tyrant's death. A sudden spasm of liberty gives the whole people gigantic strength. In an instant they recover all, and more than all, the rights which they had lost. The cities of Holland, Flanders, and other provinces call a convention at Ghent. Laying aside their musty feuds, men of all parties-Hooks and Kabbeljaws, patricians and people, move forward in phalanx to recover their national constitutions. On the other hand, Louis the Eleventh seizes Burgundy, claiming the territory for his crown, the heiress for his son. The situation is critical for the Lady Mary. As usual in such cases, appeals are made to the faithful commons. A prodigality of oaths and pledges is showered upon the people, that their loyalty may be refreshed and grow green. The congress meets at Ghent. The Lady Mary professes much, but she will keep her vow. The deputies are called upon to rally the country around the duchess, and to resist the fraud and force of Louis. The congress is willing to maintain the cause of its young mistress. The members declare, at the same time, very roundly, "that the provinces have been much impoverished and oppressed by the enormous taxation imposed upon them by the ruinous wars waged by Duke Charles from the beginning to the end of his life." They rather require "to be relieved than additionally encumbered." They add that, "for many years past, there has been a constant violation of the provincial and municipal charters, and that they should be happy to see them restored."

The result of the deliberations is the formal grant by Duchess Mary of the "Groot Privilege," or Great Privilege, the Magna Charta of Holland. Although this instrument was afterwards violated, and indeed abolished, it became the foundation of the republic. It was a recapitulation and recognition of ancient rights, not an acquisition of new privileges. It was a restoration, not a revolution. Its principal points deserve attention from those interested in the political progress of mankind.

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“The duchess shall not marry without consent of the estates of her provinces. All offices in her gift shall be conferred on natives only. No man shall fill two offices. No office shall be farmed. The ‘Great Council and Supreme Court of Holland’ is re-established. Causes shall be brought before it on appeal from the ordinary courts. It shall have no original jurisdiction of matters within the cognizance of the provincial and municipal tribunals. The estates and cities are guaranteed in their right not to be summoned to justice beyond the limits of their territory. The cities, in common with all the provinces of the Netherlands, may hold diets as often ten and at such places as they choose. No new taxes shall be imposed but by consent of the provincial estates. Neither the duchess nor her descendants shall begin either an offensive or defensive war without consent of the estates. In case a war be illegally undertaken, the estates are not bound to contribute to its maintenance. In all public and legal documents, the Netherland language shall be employed. The commands of the duchess shall be invalid, if conflicting with the privileges of a city.

“The seat of the Supreme Council is transferred from Mechlin to the Hague. No money shall be coined, nor its value raised or lowered, but by consent of the estates. Cities are not to be compelled to contribute to requests which they have not voted. The sovereign shall come in person before the estates, to make his request for supplies.”

Here was good work. The land was rescued at a blow from the helpless condition to which it had been reduced. This summary annihilation of all the despotic arrangements of Charles was enough to raise him from his tomb. The law, the sword, the purse, were all taken from the hand of the sovereign and placed within the control of parliament. Such sweeping reforms, if maintained, would restore health to the body politic. They gave, moreover, an earnest of what was one day to arrive. Certainly, for the fifteenth century, the “Great Privilege” was a reasonably liberal constitution. Where else upon earth, at that day, was there half so much liberty as was thus guaranteed? The congress of the Netherlands, according to their Magna Charta, had power to levy all taxes, to regulate commerce and manufactures, to declare war, to coin money, to raise armies and navies. The executive was required to ask for money in person, could appoint only natives to office, recognized the right of disobedience in his subjects, if his commands should conflict with law, and acknowledged himself bound by decisions of courts of justice. The cities appointed their own magistrates, held diets at their own pleasure, made their local by-laws and saw to their execution. Original cognizance of legal matters belonged to the municipal courts, appellate jurisdiction to the supreme tribunal, in which the judges were appointed by the sovereign. The liberty of the citizen against arbitrary imprisonment was amply provided for. The ‘jus de non evocando’, the habeas corpus of Holland, was re-established.

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Truly, here was a fundamental law which largely, roundly, and reasonably recognized the existence of a people with hearts, heads, and hands of their own. It was a vast step in advance of natural servitude, the dogma of the dark ages. It was a noble and temperate vindication of natural liberty, the doctrine of more enlightened days. To no people in the world more than to the stout burghers of Flanders and Holland belongs the honor of having battled audaciously and perennially in behalf of human rights.

Similar privileges to the great charter of Holland are granted to many other provinces; especially to Flanders, ever ready to stand forward in fierce vindication of freedom. For a season all is peace and joy; but the duchess is young, weak, and a woman. There is no lack of intriguing politicians, reactionary councillors. There is a cunning old king in the distance, lying in wait; seeking what he can devour. A mission goes from the estates to France. The well-known tragedy of Imbrecourt and Hugonet occurs. Envoys from the states, they dare to accept secret instructions from the duchess to enter into private negotiations with the French monarch, against their colleagues—against the great charter—against their country. Sly Louis betrays them, thinking that policy the more expedient. They are seized in Ghent, rapidly tried, and as rapidly beheaded by the enraged burghers. All the entreaties of the Lady Mary, who, dressed in mourning garments, with dishevelled hair, unloosed girdle, and streaming eyes; appears at the town-house and afterwards in the market place, humbly to intercede for her servants, are fruitless. There is no help for the juggling diplomatists. The punishment was sharp. Was it more severe and sudden than that which betrayed monarchs usually inflict? Would the Flemings, at that critical moment, have deserved their freedom had they not taken swift and signal vengeance for this first infraction of their newly recognized rights? Had it not been weakness to spare the traitors who had thus stained the childhood of the national joy at liberty regained?

IX.

Another step, and a wide one, into the great stream of European history. The Lady Mary espouses the Archduke Maximilian. The Netherlands are about to become Habsburg property. The Ghenters reject the pretensions of the dauphin, and select for husband of their duchess the very man whom her father had so stupidly rejected. It had been a wiser choice for Charles the Bold than for the Netherlanders. The marriage takes place on the 18th of August, 1477. Mary of Burgundy passes from the guardianship of Ghent burghers into that of the emperor's son. The crafty husband allies himself with the city party, feeling where the strength lies. He knows that the voracious Kabbeljaws have at last swallowed the Hooks, and run away with them. Promising himself future rights of reconsideration, he is liberal in

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promises to the municipal party. In the mean time he is governor and guardian of his wife and her provinces. His children are to inherit the Netherlands and all that therein is. What can be more consistent than laws of descent, regulated by right divine? At the beginning of the century, good Philip dispossesses Jacqueline, because females can not inherit. At its close, his granddaughter succeeds to the property, and transmits it to her children. Pope and emperor maintain both positions with equal logic. The policy and promptness of Maximilian are as effective as the force and fraud of Philip. The Lady Mary falls from her horse and dies. Her son, Philip, four years of age, is recognized as successor. Thus the house of Burgundy is followed by that of Austria, the fifth and last family which governed Holland, previously to the erection of the republic. Maximilian is recognized by the provinces as governor and guardian, during the minority of his children. Flanders alone refuses. The burghers, ever prompt in action, take personal possession of the child Philip, and carry on the government in his name. A commission of citizens and nobles thus maintain their authority against Maximilian for several years. In 1488, the archduke, now King of the Romans, with a small force of cavalry, attempts to take the city of Bruges, but the result is a mortifying one to the Roman king. The citizens of Bruges take him. Maximilian, with several councillors, is kept a prisoner in a house on the market-place. The magistrates are all changed, the affairs of government conducted in the name of the young Philip alone. Meantime, the estates of the other Netherlands assemble at Ghent; anxious, unfortunately, not for the national liberty, but for that of the Roman king. Already Holland, torn again by civil feuds, and blinded by the artifices of Maximilian, has deserted, for a season, the great cause to which Flanders has remained so true. At last, a treaty is made between the archduke and the Flemings. Maximilian is to be regent of the other provinces; Philip, under guardianship of a council, is to govern Flanders. Moreover, a congress of all the provinces is to be summoned annually, to provide for the general welfare. Maximilian signs and swears to the treaty on the 16th May, 1488. He swears, also, to dismiss all foreign troops within four days. Giving hostages for his fidelity, he is set at liberty. What are oaths and hostages when prerogative, and the people are contending? Emperor Frederic sends to his son an army under the Duke of Saxony. The oaths are broken, the hostages left to their fate. The struggle lasts a year, but, at the end of it, the Flemings are subdued. What could a single province effect, when its sister states, even liberty-loving Holland, had basely abandoned the common cause? A new treaty is made, (Oct.1489). Maximilian obtains uncontrolled guardianship of his son, absolute dominion over Flanders and the other provinces. The insolent burghers are severely punished for remembering that they had been freemen. The magistrates of Ghent, Bruges, and Ypres, in black garments, ungirdled, bare-headed, and kneeling, are compelled to implore the despot's forgiveness, and to pay three hundred thousand crowns of gold as its price. After this, for a brief season, order reigns in Flanders.

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The course of Maximilian had been stealthy, but decided. Allying himself with the city party, he had crushed the nobles. The power thus obtained, he then turned against the burghers. Step by step he had trampled out the liberties which his wife and himself had sworn to protect. He had spurned the authority of the "Great Privilege," and all other charters. Burgomasters and other citizens had been beheaded in great numbers for appealing to their statutes against the edicts of the regent, for voting in favor of a general congress according to the unquestionable law. He had proclaimed that all landed estates should, in lack of heirs male, escheat to his own exchequer. He had debased the coin of the country, and thereby authorized unlimited swindling on the part of all his agents, from stadholders down to the meanest official. If such oppression and knavery did not justify the resistance of the Flemings to the guardianship of Maximilian, it would be difficult to find any reasonable course in political affairs save abject submission to authority.

In 1493, Maximilian succeeds to the imperial throne, at the death of his father. In the following year his son, Philip the Fair, now seventeen years of age, receives the homage of the different states of the Netherlands. He swears to maintain only the privileges granted by Philip and Charles of Burgundy, or their ancestors, proclaiming null and void all those which might have been acquired since the death of Charles. Holland, Zeland, and the other provinces accept him upon these conditions, thus ignominiously, and without a struggle, relinquishing the Great Privilege, and all similar charters.

Friesland is, for a brief season, politically separated from the rest of the country. Harassed and exhausted by centuries of warfare, foreign, and domestic, the free Frisians, at the suggestion or command of Emperor Maximilian, elect the Duke of Saxony as their Podesta. The sovereign prince, naturally proving a chief magistrate far from democratic, gets himself acknowledged, or submitted to, soon afterwards, as legitimate sovereign of Friesland. Seventeen years afterward Saxony sells the sovereignty to the Austrian house for 350,000 crowns. This little country, whose statutes proclaimed her to be "free as the wind, as long as it blew," whose institutions Charlemagne had honored and left unmolested, who had freed herself with ready poniard from Norman tyranny, who never bowed her neck to feudal chieftain, nor to the papal yoke, now driven to madness and suicide by the dissensions of her wild children, forfeits at last her independent existence. All the provinces are thus united in a common servitude, and regret, too late, their supineness at a moment when their liberties might yet have been vindicated. Their ancient and cherished charters, which their bold ancestors had earned with the sweat of their brows and the blood of their hearts, are at the mercy of an autocrat, and liable to be superseded by his edicts.

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In 1496, the momentous marriage of Philip the Fair with Joanna, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Castile and Aragon, is solemnized. Of this union, in the first year of the century, is born the second Charlemagne, who is to unite Spain and the Netherlands, together with so many vast and distant realms, under a single sceptre. Six years afterwards (Sept. 25, 1506), Philip dies at Burgos. A handsome profligate, devoted to his pleasures, and leaving the cares of state to his ministers, Philip, "croit-conseil," is the bridge over which the house of Habsburg passes to almost universal monarchy, but, in himself, is nothing.

X.

Two prudent marriages, made by Austrian archdukes within twenty years, have altered the face of the earth. The stream, which we have been tracing from its source, empties itself at last into the ocean of a world-empire. Count Dirk the First, lord of a half-submerged corner of Europe, is succeeded by Count Charles the Second of Holland, better known as Charles the Fifth, King of Spain, Sicily, and Jerusalem, Duke of Milan, Emperor of Germany, Dominator in Asia and Africa, autocrat of half the world. The leading events of his brilliant reign are familiar to every child. The Netherlands now share the fate of so large a group of nations, a fate, to these provinces, most miserable. The weddings of Austria Felix were not so prolific of happiness to her subjects as to herself. It can never seem just or reasonable that the destiny of many millions of human beings should depend upon the marriage-settlements of one man with one woman, and a permanent, prosperous empire can never be reared upon so frail a foundation. The leading thought of the first Charlemagne was a noble and a useful one, nor did his imperial scheme seem chimerical, even although time, wiser than monarchs or lawgivers, was to prove it impracticable. To weld into one great whole the various tribes of Franks, Frisians, Saxons, Lombards, Burgundians, and others, still in their turbulent youth, and still composing one great Teutonic family; to enforce the mutual adhesion of naturally coherent masses, all of one lineage, one language, one history, and which were only beginning to exhibit their tendencies to insulation, to acquiesce in a variety of local laws and customs, while an iron will was to concentrate a vast, but homogeneous, people into a single nation; to raise up from the grave of corrupt and buried Rome a fresh, vigorous, German, Christian empire; this was a reasonable and manly thought. Far different the conception of the second Charlemagne. To force into discordant union, tribes which, for seven centuries, had developed themselves into hostile nations, separated by geography and history, customs and laws, to combine many millions under one sceptre, not because of natural identity, but for the sake of composing one splendid family property, to establish unity by

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annihilating local institutions, to supersede popular and liberal charters by the edicts of a central despotism, to do battle with the whole spirit of an age, to regard the souls as well as the bodies of vast multitudes as the personal property of one individual, to strive for the perpetuation in a single house of many crowns, which accident had blended, and to imagine the consecration of the whole system by placing the pope's triple diadem forever upon the imperial head of the Habsburgs;—all this was not the effort of a great, constructive genius, but the selfish scheme of an autocrat.

The union of no two countries could be less likely to prove advantageous or agreeable than that of the Netherlands and Spain. They were widely separated geographically, while in history, manners, and politics, they were utterly opposed to each other. Spain, which had but just assumed the form of a single state by the combination of all its kingdoms, with its haughty nobles descended from petty kings, and arrogating almost sovereign power within their domains, with its fierce enthusiasm for the Catholic religion, which, in the course of long warfare with the Saracens, had become the absorbing characteristic of a whole nation, with its sparse population scattered over a wide and stern country, with a military spirit which led nearly all classes to prefer poverty to the wealth attendant upon degrading pursuits of trade;—Spain, with her gloomy, martial, and exaggerated character, was the absolute contrast of the Netherlands.

These provinces had been rarely combined into a whole, but there was natural affinity in their character, history, and position. There was life, movement, bustling activity every where. An energetic population swarmed in all the flourishing cities which dotted the surface of a contracted and highly cultivated country. Their ships were the carriers for the world;—their merchants, if invaded in their rights, engaged in vigorous warfare with their own funds and their own frigates; their fabrics were prized over the whole earth; their burghers possessed the wealth of princes, lived with royal luxury, and exercised vast political influence; their love of liberty was their predominant passion. Their religious ardor had not been fully awakened; but the events of the next generation were to prove that in no respect more than in the religious sentiment, were the two races opposed to each other. It was as certain that the Netherlanders would be fierce reformers as that the Spaniards would be uncompromising persecutors. Unhallowed was the union between nations thus utterly contrasted.

Philip the Fair and Ferdinand had detested and quarrelled with each other from the beginning. The Spaniards and Flemings participated in the mutual antipathy, and hated each other cordially at first sight. The unscrupulous avarice of the Netherland nobles in Spain, their grasping and venal ambition, enraged and disgusted the haughty Spaniards. This international malignity furnishes one of the keys to a proper understanding of the great revolt in the next reign.

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The provinces, now all united again under an emperor, were treated, opulent and powerful as they were, as obscure dependencies. The regency over them was entrusted by Charles to his near relatives, who governed in the interest of his house, not of the country. His course towards them upon the religious question will be hereafter indicated. The political character of his administration was typified, and, as it were, dramatized, on the occasion of the memorable insurrection at Ghent. For this reason, a few interior details concerning that remarkable event, seem requisite.

XI.

Ghent was, in all respects, one of the most important cities in Europe. Erasmus, who, as a Hollander and a courtier, was not likely to be partial to the turbulent Flemings, asserted that there was no town in all Christendom to be compared to it for size, power, political constitution, or the culture of its inhabitants. It was, said one of its inhabitants at the epoch of the insurrection, rather a country than a city. The activity and wealth of its burghers were proverbial. The bells were rung daily, and the drawbridges over the many arms of the river intersecting the streets were raised, in order that all business might be suspended, while the armies of workmen were going to or returning from their labors. As early as the fourteenth century, the age of the Artevelde, Froissart estimated the number of fighting men whom Ghent could bring into the field at eighty thousand. The city, by its jurisdiction over many large but subordinate towns, disposed of more than its own immediate population, which has been reckoned as high as two hundred thousand.

Placed in the midst of well cultivated plains, Ghent was surrounded by strong walls, the external circuit of which measured nine miles. Its streets and squares were spacious and elegant, its churches and other public buildings numerous and splendid. The sumptuous church of Saint John or Saint Bavon, where Charles the Fifth had been baptized, the ancient castle whither Baldwin Bras de Fer had brought the daughter of Charles the Bald, the city hall with its graceful Moorish front, the well-known belfry, where for three centuries had perched the dragon sent by the Emperor Baldwin of Flanders from Constantinople, and where swung the famous Roland, whose iron tongue had called the citizens, generation after generation, to arms, whether to win battles over foreign kings at the head of their chivalry, or to plunge their swords in each others' breasts, were all conspicuous in the city and celebrated in the land. Especially the great bell was the object of the burghers' affection, and, generally, of the sovereign's hatred; while to all it seemed, as it were, a living historical personage, endowed with the human powers and passions which it had so long directed and inflamed.

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The constitution of the city was very free. It was a little republic in all but name. Its population was divided into fifty-two guilds of manufacturers and into thirty-two tribes of weavers; each fraternity electing annually or biennially its own deans and subordinate officers. The senate, which exercised functions legislative, judicial, and administrative, subject of course to the grand council of Mechlin and to the sovereign authority, consisted of twenty-six members. These were appointed partly from the upper class, or the men who lived upon their means, partly from the manufacturers in general, and partly from the weavers. They were chosen by a college of eight electors, who were appointed by the sovereign on nomination by the citizens. The whole city, in its collective capacity, constituted one of the four estates (Membra) of the province of Flanders. It is obvious that so much liberty of form and of fact, added to the stormy character by which its citizens were distinguished, would be most offensive in the eyes of Charles, and that the delinquencies of the little commonwealth would be represented in the most glaring colors by all those quiet souls, who preferred the tranquillity of despotism to the turbulence of freedom. The city claimed, moreover, the general provisions of the "Great Privilege" of the Lady Mary, the Magna Charta, which, according to the monarchical party, had been legally abrogated by Maximilian. The liberties of the town had also been nominally curtailed by the "calf-skin" (Kalf Vel). By this celebrated document, Charles the Fifth, then fifteen years of age, had been made to threaten with condign punishment all persons who should maintain that he had sworn at his inauguration to observe any privileges or charters claimed by the Ghenters before the peace of Cadsand.

The immediate cause of the discontent, the attempt to force from Flanders a subsidy of four hundred thousand caroli, as the third part of the twelve hundred thousand granted by the states of the Netherlands, and the resistance of Ghent in opposition to the other three members of the province, will, of course, be judged differently, according as the sympathies are stronger with popular rights or with prerogative. The citizens claimed that the subsidy could only be granted by the unanimous consent of the four estates of the province. Among other proofs of this their unquestionable right, they appealed to a muniment, which had never existed, save in the imagination of the credulous populace. At a certain remote epoch, one of the Counts of Flanders, it was contended, had gambled away his countship to the Earl of Holland, but had been extricated from his dilemma by the generosity of Ghent. The burghers of the town had paid the debts and redeemed the sovereignty of their lord, and had thereby gained, in return, a charter, called the Bargain of Flanders (Koop van Flandern). Among the privileges granted by this document, was an express stipulation that no subsidy

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should ever be granted by the province without the consent of Ghent. This charter would have been conclusive in the present emergency, had it not labored under the disadvantage of never having existed. It was supposed by many that the magistrates, some of whom were favorable to government, had hidden the document. Lieven Pyl, an ex-senator, was supposed to be privy to its concealment. He was also, with more justice, charged with an act of great baseness and effrontery. Reputed by the citizens to carry to the Queen Regent their positive refusal to grant the subsidy, he had, on the contrary, given an answer, in their name, in the affirmative. For these delinquencies, the imaginary and the real, he was inhumanly tortured and afterwards beheaded. "I know, my children," said he upon the scaffold, "that you will be grieved when you have seen my blood flow, and that you will regret me when it is too late." It does not appear, however, that there was any especial reason to regret him, however sanguinary the punishment which had requited his broken faith.

The mischief being thus afoot, the tongue of Roland, and the easily-excited spirits of the citizens, soon did the rest. Ghent broke forth into open insurrection. They had been willing to enlist and pay troops under their own banners, but they had felt outraged at the enormous contribution demanded of them for a foreign war, undertaken in the family interests of their distant master. They could not find the "Bargain of Flanders," but they got possession of the odious "calf skin," which was solemnly cut in two by the dean of the weavers. It was then torn in shreds by the angry citizens, many of whom paraded the streets with pieces of the hated document stuck in their caps, like plumes. From these demonstrations they proceeded to intrigues with Francis the First. He rejected them, and gave notice of their overtures to Charles, who now resolved to quell the insurrection, at once. Francis wrote, begging that the Emperor would honor him by coming through France; "wishing to assure you," said he, "my lord and good brother, by this letter, written and signed by my hand, upon my honor, and on the faith of a prince, and of the best brother you have, that in passing through my kingdom every possible honor and hospitality will be offered you, even as they could be to myself." Certainly, the French king, after such profuse and voluntary pledges, to confirm which he, moreover, offered his two sons and other great individuals as hostages, could not, without utterly disgracing himself, have taken any unhandsome advantage of the Emperor's presence in his dominions. The reflections often made concerning the high-minded chivalry of Francis, and the subtle knowledge of human nature displayed by Charles upon the occasion, seem, therefore, entirely superfluous. The Emperor came to Paris. "Here," says a citizen of Ghent, at the time, who has left a minute account of the transaction

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upon record, but whose sympathies were ludicrously with the despot and against his own townspeople, "here the Emperor was received as if the God of Paradise had descended." On the 9th of February, 1540, he left Brussels; on the 14th he came to Ghent. His entrance into the city lasted more than six hours. Four thousand lancers, one thousand archers, five thousand halberdmen and musqueteers composed his bodyguard, all armed to the teeth and ready for combat. The Emperor rode in their midst, surrounded by "cardinals, archbishops, bishops, and other great ecclesiastical lords," so that the terrors of the Church were combined with the panoply of war to affright the souls of the turbulent burghers. A brilliant train of "dukes, princes, earls, barons, grand masters, and seignors, together with most of the Knights of the Fleece," were, according to the testimony of the same eyewitness, in attendance upon his Majesty. This unworthy son of Ghent was in ecstasies with the magnificence displayed upon the occasion. There was such a number of "grand lords, members of sovereign houses, bishops, and other ecclesiastical dignitaries going about the streets, that," as the poor soul protested with delight, "there was nobody else to be met with." Especially the fine clothes of these distinguished guests excited his warmest admiration. It was wonderful to behold, he said, "the nobility and great richness of the princes and seignors, displayed as well in their beautiful furs, martins and sables, as in the great chains of fine gold which they wore twisted round their necks, and the pearls and precious stones in their bonnets and otherwise, which they displayed in great abundance. It was a very triumphant thing to see them so richly dressed and accoutred."

An idea may be formed of the size and wealth of the city at this period, from the fact that it received and accommodated sixty thousand strangers, with their fifteen thousand horses, upon the occasion of the Emperor's visit. Charles allowed a month of awful suspense to intervene between his arrival and his vengeance. Despair and hope alternated during the interval. On the 17th of March, the spell was broken by the execution of nineteen persons, who were beheaded as ringleaders. On the 29th of April, he pronounced sentence upon the city. The hall where it was rendered was open to all comers, and graced by the presence of the Emperor, the Queen Regent, and the great functionaries of Court, Church, and State. The decree, now matured, was read at length. It annulled all the charters, privileges, and laws of Ghent. It confiscated all its public property, rents, revenues, houses, artillery, munitions of war, and in general every thing which the corporation, or the traders, each and all, possessed in common. In particular, the great bell—Roland was condemned and sentenced to immediate removal. It was decreed that the four hundred thousand florins, which had caused the revolt, should forthwith be paid,

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together with an additional fine by Ghent of one hundred and fifty thousand, besides six thousand a year, forever after. In place of their ancient and beloved constitution, thus annihilated at a blow, was promulgated a new form of municipal government of the simplest kind, according to which all officers were in future to be appointed by himself and the guilds, to be reduced to half their number; shorn of all political power, and deprived entirely of self-government. It was, moreover, decreed, that the senators, their pensionaries, clerks and secretaries, thirty notable burghers, to be named by the Emperor, with the great dean and second dean of the weavers, all dressed in black robes, without their chains, and bareheaded, should appear upon an appointed day, in company with fifty persons from the guilds, and fifty others, to be arbitrarily named, in their shirts, with halters upon their necks. This large number of deputies, as representatives of the city, were then to fall upon their knees before the Emperor, say in a loud and intelligible voice, by the mouth of one of their clerks, that they were extremely sorry for the disloyalty, disobedience, infraction of laws, commotions, rebellion, and high treason, of which they had been guilty, promise that they would never do the like again, and humbly implore him, for the sake of the Passion of Jesus Christ, to grant them mercy and forgiveness.

The third day of May was appointed for the execution of the sentence. Charles, who was fond of imposing exhibitions and prided himself upon arranging them with skill, was determined that this occasion should be long remembered by all burghers throughout his dominions who might be disposed to insist strongly upon their municipal rights. The streets were alive with troops: cavalry and infantry in great numbers keeping strict guard at every point throughout the whole extent of the city; for it was known that the hatred produced by the sentence was most deadly, and that nothing but an array of invincible force could keep those hostile sentiments in check. The senators in their black mourning robes, the other deputies in linen shirts, bareheaded, with halters on their necks, proceeded, at the appointed hour, from the senate house to the imperial residence. High on his throne, with the Queen Regent at his side, surrounded by princes, prelates and nobles, guarded by his archers and halberdiers, his crown on his head and his sceptre in his hand, the Emperor, exalted, sat. The senators and burghers, in their robes of humiliation, knelt in the dust at his feet. The prescribed words of contrition and of supplication for mercy were then read by the pensionary, all the deputies remaining upon their knees, and many of them crying bitterly with rage and shame. "What principally distressed them," said the honest citizen, whose admiration for the brilliant accoutrement of the princes and prelates has been recorded, "was to have the halter on their necks, which they found hard to bear, and, if they had not been compelled, they would rather have died than submit to it."

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As soon as the words had been all spoken by the pensionary, the Emperor, whose cue was now to appear struggling with mingled emotions of reasonable wrath and of natural benignity, performed his part with much dramatic effect. "He held himself coyly for a little time," says the eye-witness, "without saying a word; deporting himself as though he were considering whether or not he would grant the pardon for which the culprits had prayed." Then the Queen Regent enacted her share in the show. Turning to his Majesty "with all reverence, honor and humility, she begged that he would concede forgiveness, in honor of his nativity, which had occurred in that city."

Upon this the Emperor "made a fine show of benignity," and replied "very sweetly" that in consequence of his "fraternal love for her, by reason of his being a gentle and virtuous prince, who preferred mercy to the rigor of justice, and in view of their repentance, he would accord his pardon to the citizens."

The Netherlands, after this issue to the struggle of Ghent, were reduced, practically, to a very degraded condition. The form of local self-government remained, but its spirit, when invoked, only arose to be derided. The supreme court of Mechlin, as in the days of Charles the Bold, was again placed in despotic authority above the ancient charters. Was it probable that the lethargy of provinces, which had reached so high a point of freedom only to be deprived of it at last, could endure forever? Was it to be hoped that the stern spirit of religious enthusiasm, allying itself with the—keen instinct of civil liberty, would endue the provinces with strength to throw off the Spanish yoke?

XII.

It is impossible to comprehend the character of the great Netherland revolt in the sixteenth century without taking a rapid retrospective survey of the religious phenomena exhibited in the provinces. The introduction of Christianity has been already indicated. From the earliest times, neither prince, people, nor even prelates were very dutiful to the pope. As the papal authority made progress, strong resistance was often made to its decrees. The bishops of Utrecht were dependent for their wealth and territory upon the good will of the Emperor. They were the determined opponents of Hildebrand, warm adherents of the Hohenstaufers-Ghibelline rather than Guelph. Heresy was a plant of early growth in the Netherlands. As early as the beginning of the 12th century, the notorious Tanchelyn preached at Antwerp, attacking the authority of the pope and of all other ecclesiastics; scoffing at the ceremonies and sacraments of the Church. Unless his character and career have been grossly misrepresented, he was the most infamous of the many impostors who have so often disgraced the cause of religious reformation. By more than four centuries, he anticipated the licentiousness and greediness manifested by a series of false prophets, and was the first to turn both the stupidity of a populace and the viciousness of a priesthood to his own advancement; an ambition which afterwards reached its most signal expression in the celebrated John of Leyden.

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The impudence of Tanchelyn and the superstition of his followers seem alike incredible. All Antwerp was his harem. He levied, likewise, vast sums upon his converts, and whenever he appeared in public, his apparel and pomp were befitting an emperor. Three thousand armed satellites escorted his steps and put to death all who resisted his commands. So groveling became the superstition of his followers that they drank of the water in which, he had washed, and treasured it as a divine elixir. Advancing still further in his experiments upon human credulity, he announced his approaching marriage with the Virgin Mary, bade all his disciples to the wedding, and exhibited himself before an immense crowd in company with an image of his holy bride. He then ordered the people to provide for the expenses of the nuptials and the dowry of his wife, placing a coffer upon each side of the image, to receive the contributions of either sex. Which is the most wonderful manifestation in the history of this personage—the audacity of the impostor, or the bestiality of his victims? His career was so successful in the Netherlands that he had the effrontery to proceed to Rome, promulgating what he called his doctrines as he went. He seems to have been assassinated by a priest in an obscure brawl, about the year 1115.

By the middle of the 12th century, other and purer heresiarchs had arisen. Many Netherlanders became converts to the doctrines of Waldo. From that period until the appearance of Luther, a succession of sects—Waldenses, Albigenses, Perfectists, Lollards, Poplicans, Arnaldists, Bohemian Brothers—waged perpetual but unequal warfare with the power and depravity of the Church, fertilizing with their blood the future field of the Reformation. Nowhere was the persecution of heretics more relentless than in the Netherlands. Suspected persons were subjected to various torturing but ridiculous ordeals. After such trial, death by fire was the usual but, perhaps, not the most severe form of execution. In Flanders, monastic ingenuity had invented another most painful punishment for Waldenses and similar malefactors. A criminal whose guilt had been established by the hot iron, hot ploughshare, boiling kettle, or other logical proof, was stripped and bound to the stake:—he was then flayed, from the neck to the navel, while swarms of bees were let loose to fasten upon his bleeding flesh and torture him to a death of exquisite agony.

Nevertheless heresy increased in the face of oppression. The Scriptures, translated by Waldo into French, were rendered into Netherland rhyme, and the converts to the Vaudois doctrine increased in numbers and boldness. At the same time the power and luxury of the clergy was waxing daily. The bishops of Utrecht, no longer the defenders of the people against arbitrary power, conducted themselves like little popes. Yielding in dignity neither to king nor kaiser, they exacted homage from the most powerful princes of the

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Netherlands. The clerical order became the most privileged of all. The accused priest refused to acknowledge the temporal tribunals. The protection of ecclesiastical edifices was extended over all criminals and fugitives from justice—a beneficent result in those sanguinary ages, even if its roots were sacerdotal pride. To establish an accusation against a bishop, seventy-two witnesses were necessary; against a deacon, twenty-seven; against an inferior dignitary, seven; while two were sufficient to convict a layman. The power to read and write helped the clergy to much wealth. Privileges and charters from petty princes, gifts and devises from private persons, were documents which few, save ecclesiastics, could draw or dispute. Not content, moreover, with their territories and their tithings, the churchmen perpetually devised new burthens upon the peasantry. Ploughs, sickles, horses, oxen, all implements of husbandry, were taxed for the benefit of those who toiled not, but who gathered into barns. In the course of the twelfth century, many religious houses, richly endowed with lands and other property, were founded in the Netherlands. Was hand or voice raised against clerical encroachment—the priests held ever in readiness a deadly weapon of defence: a blasting anathema was thundered against their antagonist, and smote him into submission. The disciples of Him who ordered his followers to bless their persecutors, and to love their enemies, invented such Christian formulas as these:—“In the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, the blessed Virgin Mary, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul, and all other Saints in Heaven, do we curse and cut off from our Communion him who has thus rebelled against us. May the curse strike him in his house, barn, bed, field, path, city, castle. May he be cursed in battle, accursed in praying, in speaking, in silence, in eating, in drinking, in sleeping. May he be accursed in his taste, hearing, smell, and all his senses. May the curse blast his eyes, head, and his body, from his crown to the soles of his feet. I conjure you, Devil, and all your imps, that you take no rest till you have brought him to eternal shame; till he is destroyed by drowning or hanging, till he is torn to pieces by wild beasts, or consumed by fire. Let his children become orphans, his wife a widow. I command you, Devil, and all your imps, that even as I now blow out these torches, you do immediately extinguish the light from his eyes. So be it—so be it. Amen. Amen.” So speaking, the curser was wont to blow out two waxen torches which he held in his hands, and, with this practical illustration, the anathema was complete.

Such insane ravings, even in the mouth of some impotent beldame, were enough to excite a shudder, but in that dreary epoch, these curses from the lips of clergymen were deemed sufficient to draw down celestial lightning upon the head, not of the blasphemer, but of his victim. Men, who trembled neither at sword nor fire, cowered like slaves before such horrid imprecations, uttered by tongues gifted, as it seemed, with superhuman power. Their fellow-men shrank from the wretches thus blasted, and refused communication with them as unclean and abhorred.

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By the end of the thirteenth century, however, the clerical power was already beginning to decline. It was not the corruption of the Church, but its enormous wealth which engendered the hatred, with which it was by many regarded. Temporal princes and haughty barons began to dispute the right of ecclesiastics to enjoy vast estates, while refusing the burthen of taxation, and unable to draw a sword for the common defence. At this period, the Counts of Flanders, of Holland, and other Netherland sovereigns, issued decrees, forbidding clerical institutions from acquiring property, by devise, gift, purchase, or any other mode. The downfall of the rapacious and licentious knights-templar in the provinces and throughout Europe, was another severe blow administered at the same time. The attacks upon Church abuses redoubled in boldness, as its authority declined. Towards the end of the fourteenth century, the doctrines of Wicklif had made great progress in the land. Early in the fifteenth, the executions of Huss and Jerome of Prague, produce the Bohemian rebellion. The Pope proclaims a crusade against the Hussites. Knights and prelates, esquires and citizens, enlist in the sacred cause, throughout Holland and its sister provinces; but many Netherlanders, who had felt the might of Ziska's arm, come back, feeling more sympathy with the heresy which they had attacked, than with the Church for which they had battled.

Meantime, the restrictions imposed by Netherland sovereigns upon clerical rights to hold or acquire property, become more stern and more general. On the other hand, with the invention of printing, the cause of Reformation takes a colossal stride in advance. A Bible, which, before, had cost five hundred crowns, now costs but five. The people acquire the power of reading God's Word, or of hearing it read, for themselves. The light of truth dispels the clouds of superstition, as by a new revelation. The Pope and his monks are found to bear, very often, but faint resemblance to Jesus and his apostles. Moreover, the instinct of self-interest sharpens the eye of the public. Many greedy priests, of lower rank, had turned shop-keepers in the Netherlands, and were growing rich by selling their wares, exempt from taxation, at a lower rate than lay hucksters could afford. The benefit of clergy, thus taking the bread from the mouths of many, excites jealousy; the more so, as, besides their miscellaneous business, the reverend traders have a most lucrative branch of commerce from which other merchants are excluded. The sale of absolutions was the source of large fortunes to the priests. The enormous impudence of this traffic almost exceeds belief. Throughout the Netherlands, the price current of the wares thus offered for sale, was published in every town and village. God's pardon for crimes already committed, or about to be committed, was advertised according to a graduated tariff. Thus, poisoning, for example, was absolved for eleven ducats, six livres

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tournois. Absolution for incest was afforded at thirty-six livres, three ducats. Perjury came to seven livres and three carlines. Pardon for murder, if not by poison, was cheaper. Even a parricide could buy forgiveness at God's tribunal at one ducat; four livres, eight carlines. Henry de Montfort, in the year 1448, purchased absolution for that crime at that price. Was it strange that a century or so of this kind of work should produce a Luther? Was it unnatural that plain people, who loved the ancient Church, should rather desire to see her purged of such blasphemous abuses, than to hear of St. Peter's dome rising a little nearer to the clouds on these proceeds of commuted crime?

At the same time, while ecclesiastical abuses are thus augmenting, ecclesiastical power is diminishing in the Netherlands. The Church is no longer able to protect itself against the secular aim. The halcyon days of ban, book and candle, are gone. In 1459, Duke Philip of Burgundy prohibits the churches from affording protection to fugitives. Charles the Bold, in whose eyes nothing is sacred save war and the means of making it, lays a heavy impost upon all clerical property. Upon being resisted, he enforces collection with the armed hand. The sword and the pen, strength and intellect, no longer the exclusive servants or instruments of priestcraft, are both in open revolt. Charles the Bold storms one fortress, Doctor Grandfort, of Groningen, batters another. This learned Frisian, called "the light of the world," friend and compatriot of the great Rudolph Agricola, preaches throughout the provinces, uttering bold denunciations of ecclesiastical error. He even disputes the infallibility of the Pope, denies the utility of prayers for the dead, and inveighs against the whole doctrine of purgatory and absolution.

With the beginning of the 16th century, the great Reformation was actually alive. The name of Erasmus of Rotterdam was already celebrated; the man, who, according to Grotius, "so well showed the road to a reasonable reformation." But if Erasmus showed the road, he certainly did not travel far upon it himself. Perpetual type of the quietist, the moderate man, he censured the errors of the Church with discrimination and gentleness, as if Borgianism had not been too long rampant at Rome, as if men's minds throughout Christendom were not too deeply stirred to be satisfied with mild rebukes against sin, especially when the mild rebuker was in receipt of livings and salaries from the sinner. Instead of rebukes, the age wanted reforms. The Sage of Rotterdam was a keen observer, a shrewd satirist, but a moderate moralist. He loved ease, good company, the soft repose of princely palaces, better than a life of martyrdom and a death at the stake. He was not of the stuff of which martyrs are made, as he handsomely confessed on more than one occasion. "Let others affect martyrdom," he said, "for myself I am unworthy of the honor;" and, at

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another time, “I am not of a mind,” he observed “to venture my life for the truth’s sake; all men have not strength to endure the martyr’s death. For myself, if it came to the point, I should do no better than Simon Peter.” Moderate in all things, he would have liked, he said, to live without eating and drinking, although he never found it convenient to do so, and he rejoiced when advancing age diminished his tendency to other carnal pleasures in which he had moderately indulged. Although awake to the abuses of the Church, he thought Luther going too fast and too far. He began by applauding ended by censuring the monk of Wittemberg. The Reformation might have been delayed for centuries had Erasmus and other moderate men been the only reformers. He will long be honored for his elegant, Latinity. In the republic of letters, his efforts to infuse a pure taste, a sound criticism, a love for the beautiful and the classic, in place of the owlish pedantry which had so long flapped and hooted through medieval cloisters, will always be held in grateful reverence. In the history of the religious Reformation, his name seems hardly to deserve the commendations of Grotius.

As the schism yawns, more and more ominously, throughout Christendom, the Emperor naturally trembles. Anxious to save the state, but being no antique Roman, he wishes to close the gulf, but with more convenience to himself: He conceives the highly original plan of combining Church and Empire under one crown. This is Maximilian’s scheme for Church reformation. An hereditary papacy, a perpetual pope-emperor, the Charlemagne and Hildebrand systems united and simplified—thus the world may yet be saved. “Nothing more honorable, nobler, better, could happen to us,” writes Maximilian to Paul Lichtenstein (16th Sept. 1511), “than to re-annex the said popedom—which properly belongs to us—to our Empire. Cardinal Adrian approves our reasons and encourages us to proceed, being of opinion that we should not have much trouble with the cardinals. It is much to be feared that the Pope may die of his present sickness. He has lost his appetite, and fills himself with so much drink that his health is destroyed. As such matters can not be arranged without money, we have promised the cardinals, whom we expect to bring over, 300,000 ducats, [Recall that the fine for redemption and pardon for the sin of murder was at that time one ducat. D.W.] which we shall raise from the Fuggers, and make payable in Rome upon the appointed day.”

These business-like arrangements he communicates, two days afterwards, in a secret letter to his daughter Margaret, and already exults at his future eminence, both in this world and the next. “We are sending Monsieur de Gurce,” he says; “to make an agreement with the Pope, that we may be taken as coadjutor, in order that, upon his death, we may be sure of the papacy, and, afterwards, of becoming a saint. After my decease, therefore, you will be constrained to adore me, of which I shall be very proud. I am beginning to work upon the cardinals, in which affair two or three hundred thousand ducats will be of great service.” The letter was signed, “From the hand of your good father, Maximilian, future Pope.”

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These intrigues are not destined, however, to be successful. Pope Julius lives two years longer; Leo the Tenth succeeds; and, as Medici are not much prone to Church reformation some other scheme, and perhaps some other reformer, may be wanted. Meantime, the traffic in bulls of absolution becomes more horrible than ever. Money must be raised to supply the magnificent extravagance of Rome. Accordingly, Christians, throughout Europe, are offered by papal authority, guarantees of forgiveness for every imaginable sin, "even for the rape of God's mother, if that were possible," together with a promise of life eternal in Paradise, all upon payment of the price affixed to each crime. The Netherlands, like other countries, are districted and farmed for the collection of this papal revenue. Much of the money thus raised, remains in the hands of the vile collectors. Sincere Catholics, who love and honor the ancient religion, shrink with horror at the spectacle offered on every side. Criminals buying Paradise for money, monks spending the money thus paid in gaming houses, taverns, and brothels; this seems, to those who have studied their Testaments, a different scheme of salvation from the one promulgated by Christ. There has evidently been a departure from the system of earlier apostles. Innocent conservative souls are much perplexed; but, at last, all these infamies arouse a giant to do battle with the giant wrong. Martin Luther enters the lists, all alone, armed only with a quiver filled with ninety-five propositions, and a bow which can send them all over Christendom with incredible swiftness. Within a few weeks the ninety-five propositions have flown through Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and are found in Jerusalem.

At the beginning, Erasmus encourages the bold friar. So long as the axe is not laid at the foot of the tree, which bears the poisonous but golden fruit, the moderate man applauds the blows. "Luther's cause is considered odious," writes Erasmus to the Elector of Saxony, "because he has, at the same time, attacked the bellies of the monks and the bulls of the Pope." He complains that the zealous man had been attacked with roiling, but not with arguments. He foresees that the work will have a bloody and turbulent result, but imputes the principal blame to the clergy. "The priests talk," said he, "of absolution in such terms, that laymen can not stomach it. Luther has been for nothing more censured than for making little of Thomas Aquinas; for wishing to diminish the absolution traffic; for having a low opinion of mendicant orders, and for respecting scholastic opinions less than the gospels. All this is considered intolerable heresy."

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Erasmus, however, was offending both parties. A swarm of monks were already buzzing about him for the bold language of his Commentaries and Dialogues. He was called Erasmus for his errors—Arasmus because he would plough up sacred things—Erasinus because he had written himself an ass—Behemoth, Antichrist, and many other names of similar import. Luther was said to have bought the deadly seed in his barn. The egg had been laid by Erasmus, hatched by Luther. On the other hand, he was reviled for not taking side manfully with the reformer. The moderate man received much denunciation from zealots on either side. He soon clears himself, however, from all suspicions of Lutheranism. He is appalled at the fierce conflict which rages far and wide. He becomes querulous as the mighty besom sweeps away sacred dust and consecrated cobwebs. “Men should not attempt every thing at once,” he writes, “but rather step by step. That which men can not improve they must look at through the fingers. If the godlessness of mankind requires such fierce physicians as Luther, if man can not be healed with soothing ointments and cooling drinks, let us hope that God will comfort, as repentant, those whom he has punished as rebellious. If the dove of Christ—not the owl of Minerva—would only fly to us, some measure might be put to the madness of mankind.”

Meantime the man, whose talk is not of doves and owls, the fierce physician, who deals not with ointments and cooling draughts, strides past the crowd of gentle quacks to smite the foul disease. Devils, thicker than tiles on house-tops, scare him not from his work. Bans and bulls, excommunications and decrees, are rained upon his head. The paternal Emperor sends down dire edicts, thicker than hail upon the earth. The Holy Father blasts and raves from Rome. Louvain doctors denounce, Louvain hangmen burn, the bitter, blasphemous books. The immoderate man stands firm in the storm, demanding argument instead of illogical thunder; shows the hangmen and the people too, outside the Elster gate at Wittenberg, that papal bulls will blaze as merrily as heretic scrolls. What need of allusion to events which changed the world—which every child has learned—to the war of Titans, uprooting of hoary trees and rock-ribbed hills, to the Worms diet, Peasant wars, the Patmos of Eisenach, and huge wrestlings with the Devil?

Imperial edicts are soon employed to suppress the Reformation in the Netherlands by force. The provinces, unfortunately; are the private property of Charles, his paternal inheritance; and most paternally, according to his view of the matter, does he deal with them. Germany can not be treated thus summarily, not being his heritage. “As it appears,” says the edict of 1521, “that the aforesaid Martin is not a man, but a devil under the form of a man, and clothed in the dress of a priest, the better to bring the human race to hell and damnation, therefore

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all his disciples and converts are to be punished with death and forfeiture of all their goods." This was succinct and intelligible. The bloody edict, issued at Worms, without even a pretence of sanction by the estates, was carried into immediate effect. The papal inquisition was introduced into the provinces to assist its operations. The bloody work, for which the reign of Charles is mainly distinguished in the Netherlands, now began. In 1523, July 1st, two Augustine monks were burned at Brussels, the first victims to Lutheranism in the provinces. Erasmus observed, with a sigh, that "two had been burned at Brussels, and that the city now began strenuously to favor Lutheranism."

Pope Adrian the Sixth, the Netherland boat-maker's son and the Emperor's ancient tutor, was sufficiently alive to the sins of churchmen. The humble scholar of Utrecht was, at least, no Borgia. At the diet of Nuremberg, summoned to put down Luther, the honest Pope declared roundly, through the Bishop of Fabiane, that "these disorders had sprung from the Sins of men, more especially from the sins of priests and prelates. Even in the holy chair," said he, "many horrible crimes have been committed. Many abuses have grown up in the ecclesiastical state. The contagious disease, spreading from the head to the members—from the Pope to lesser prelates—has spread far and wide, so that scarcely any one is to be found who does right, and who is free from infection. Nevertheless, the evils have become so ancient and manifold, that it will be necessary to go step by step."

In those passionate days, the ardent reformers were as much outraged by this pregnant confession as the ecclesiastics. It would indeed be a slow process, they thought, to move step by step in the Reformation, if between each step, a whole century was to intervene. In vain did the gentle pontiff call upon Erasmus to assuage the stormy sea with his smooth rhetoric. The Sage of Rotterdam was old and sickly; his day was over. Adrian's head; too; languishes beneath the triple crown but twenty months. He dies 13th Sept., 1523, having arrived at the conviction, according to his epitaph, that the greatest misfortune of his life was to have reigned.

Another edict, published in the Netherlands, forbids all private assemblies for devotion; all reading of the scriptures; all discussions within one's own doors concerning faith, the sacraments, the papal authority, or other religious matter, under penalty of death. The edicts were no dead letter. The fires were kept constantly supplied with human fuel by monks, who knew the art of burning reformers better than that of arguing with them. The scaffold was the most conclusive of syllogisms, and used upon all occasions. Still the people remained unconvinced. Thousands of burned heretics had not made a single convert.

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A fresh edict renewed and sharpened the punishment for reading the scriptures in private or public. At the same time, the violent personal altercation between Luther and Erasmus, upon predestination, together with the bitter dispute between Luther and Zwingli concerning the real presence, did more to impede the progress of the Reformation than ban or edict, sword or fire. The spirit of humanity hung her head, finding that the bold reformer had only a new dogma in place of the old ones, seeing that dissenters, in their turn, were sometimes as ready as papists, with age, fagot, and excommunication. In 1526, Felix Mants, the anabaptist, is drowned at Zurich, in obedience to Zwingli's pithy formula—'Qui iterum mergit mergatur'. Thus the anabaptists, upon their first appearance, were exposed to the fires of the Church and the water of the Zwinglians.

There is no doubt that the anabaptist delusion was so ridiculous and so loathsome, as to palliate or at least render intelligible the wrath with which they were regarded by all parties. The turbulence of the sect was alarming to constituted authorities, its bestiality disgraceful to the cause of religious reformation. The leaders were among the most depraved of human creatures, as much distinguished for licentiousness, blasphemy and cruelty as their followers for grovelling superstition. The evil spirit, driven out of Luther, seemed, in orthodox eyes, to have taken possession of a herd of swine. The Germans, Muncer and Hoffmann, had been succeeded, as chief prophets, by a Dutch baker, named Matthiszoon, of Harlem; who announced himself as Enoch. Chief of this man's disciples was the notorious John Boccold, of Leyden. Under the government of this prophet, the anabaptists mastered the city of Munster. Here they confiscated property, plundered churches, violated females, murdered men who refused to join the gang, and, in briefs practised all the enormities which humanity alone can conceive or perpetrate. The prophet proclaimed himself King of Sion, and sent out apostles to preach his doctrines in Germany and the Netherlands. Polygamy being a leading article of the system, he exemplified the principle by marrying fourteen wives. Of these, the beautiful widow of Matthiszoon was chief, was called the Queen of Sion, and wore a golden crown. The prophet made many fruitless efforts to seize Amsterdam and Leyden. The armed invasion of the anabaptists was repelled, but their contagious madness spread. The plague broke forth in Amsterdam. On a cold winter's night, (February, 1535), seven men and five women, inspired by the Holy Ghost, threw off their clothes and rushed naked and raving through the streets, shrieking "Wo, wo, wo! the wrath of God, the wrath of God!" When arrested, they obstinately refused to put on clothing. "We are," they observed, "the naked truth." In a day or two, these furious lunatics, who certainly deserved a madhouse rather than the scaffold, were

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all executed. The numbers of the sect increased with the martyrdom to which they were exposed, and the disorder spread to every part of the Netherlands. Many were put to death in lingering torments, but no perceptible effect was produced by the chastisement. Meantime the great chief of the sect, the prophet John, was defeated by the forces of the Bishop of Munster, who recovered his city and caused the "King of Zion" to be pinched to death with red-hot tongs.

Unfortunately the severity of government was not wreaked alone upon the prophet and his mischievous crew. Thousands and ten-thousands of virtuous, well-disposed men and women, who had as little sympathy with anabaptistical as with Roman depravity; were butchered in cold blood, under the sanguinary rule of Charles, in the Netherlands. In 1533, Queen Dowager Mary of Hungary, sister of the Emperor, Regent of the provinces, the "Christian widow" admired by Erasmus, wrote to her brother that "in her opinion all heretics, whether repentant or not, should be prosecuted with such severity as that error might be, at once, extinguished, care being only taken that the provinces were not entirely depopulated." With this humane limitation, the "Christian Widow" cheerfully set herself to superintend as foul and wholesale a system of murder as was ever organized. In 1535, an imperial edict was issued at Brussels, condemning all heretics to death; repentant males to be executed with the sword, repentant females to be buried alive, the obstinate, of both sexes, to be burned. This and similar edicts were the law of the land for twenty years, and rigidly enforced. Imperial and papal persecution continued its daily deadly work with such diligence as to make it doubtful whether the limits set by the Regent Mary might not be overstepped. In the midst of the carnage, the Emperor sent for his son Philip, that he might receive the fealty of the Netherlands as their future lord and master. Contemporaneously, a new edict was published at Brussels (29th April, 1549), confirming and reenacting all previous decrees in their most severe provisions. Thus stood religious matters in the Netherlands at the epoch of the imperial abdication.

XIII.

The civil institutions of the country had assumed their last provincial form, in the Burgundo-Austrian epoch. As already stated, their tendency, at a later period a vicious one, was to substitute fictitious personages for men. A chain of corporations was wound about the liberty of the Netherlands; yet that liberty had been originally sustained by the system in which it, one day, might be strangled. The spirit of local self-government, always the life-blood of liberty, was often excessive in its manifestations. The centrifugal force had been too much developed, and, combining with the mutual jealousy of corporations, had often made the nation weak against a common foe. Instead of popular rights there were state rights,

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for the large cities, with extensive districts and villages under their government, were rather petty states than municipalities. Although the supreme legislative and executive functions belonged to the sovereign, yet each city made its by-laws, and possessed, beside, a body of statutes and regulations, made from time to time by its own authority and confirmed by the prince. Thus a large portion, at least, of the nation shared practically in the legislative functions, which, technically, it did not claim; nor had the requirements of society made constant legislation so necessary, as that to exclude the people from the work was to enslave the country. There was popular power enough to effect much good, but it was widely scattered, and, at the same time, confined in artificial forms. The guilds were vassals of the towns, the towns, vassals of the feudal lord. The guild voted in the "broad council" of the city as one person; the city voted in the estates as one person. The people of the United Netherlands was the personage yet to be invented, It was a privilege, not a right, to exercise a handiwork, or to participate in the action of government. Yet the mass of privileges was so large, the shareholders so numerous, that practically the towns were republics. The government was in the hands of a large number of the people. Industry and intelligence led to wealth and power. This was great progress from the general servitude of the 11th and 12th centuries, an immense barrier against arbitrary rule. Loftier ideas of human rights, larger conceptions of commerce, have taught mankind, in later days, the difference between liberties and liberty, between guilds and free competition. At the same time it was the principle of mercantile association, in the middle ages, which protected the infant steps of human freedom and human industry against violence and wrong. Moreover, at this period, the tree of municipal life was still green and vigorous. The healthful flow of sap from the humblest roots to the most verdurous branches indicated the internal soundness of the core, and provided for the constant development of exterior strength. The road to political influence was open to all, not by right of birth, but through honorable exertion of heads and hands.

The chief city of the Netherlands, the commercial capital of the world, was Antwerp. In the North and East of Europe, the Hanseatic league had withered with the revolution in commerce. At the South, the splendid marble channels, through which the overland India trade had been conducted from the Mediterranean by a few stately cities, were now dry, the great aqueducts ruinous and deserted. Verona, Venice, Nuremberg, Augsburg, Bruges, were sinking, but Antwerp, with its deep and convenient river, stretched its arm to the ocean and caught the golden prize, as it fell from its sister cities' grasp. The city was so ancient that its genealogists, with ridiculous gravity, ascended to a period two centuries before

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the Trojan war, and discovered a giant, rejoicing in the classic name of Antigonus, established on the Scheld. This patriarch exacted one half the merchandise of all navigators who passed his castle, and was accustomed to amputate and cast into the river the right hands of those who infringed this simple tariff. Thus Hand-werpen, hand-throwing, became Antwerp, and hence, two hands, in the escutcheon of the city, were ever held up in heraldic attestation of the truth. The giant was, in his turn, thrown into the Scheld by a hero, named Brabo, from whose exploits Brabant derived its name; “de quo Brabonica tellus.” But for these antiquarian researches, a simpler derivation of the name would seem an t’ werf, “on the wharf.” It had now become the principal entrepot and exchange of Europe. The Huggers, Velsens, Ostetts, of Germany, the Gualterotti and Bonvisi of Italy, and many other great mercantile houses were there established. No city, except Paris, surpassed it in population, none approached it in commercial splendor. Its government was very free. The sovereign, as Marquis of Antwerp, was solemnly sworn to govern according to the ancient charters and laws. The stadholder, as his representative, shared his authority with the four estates of the city. The Senate of eighteen members was appointed by the stadholder out of a quadruple number nominated by the Senate itself and by the fourth body, called the Borgery. Half the board was thus renewed annually. It exercised executive and appellate judicial functions, appointed two burgomasters, and two pensionaries or legal councillors, and also selected the lesser magistrates and officials of the city. The board of ancients or ex-senators, held their seats ex officio. The twenty-six ward-masters, appointed, two from each ward, by the Senate on nomination by tie wards, formed the third estate. Their especial business was to enrol the militia and to attend to its mustering and training. The deans of the guilds, fifty-four in number, two from each guild, selected by the Senate, from a triple list of candidates presented by the guilds, composed the fourth estate. This influential body was always assembled in the broad-council of the city. Their duty was likewise to conduct the examination of candidates claiming admittance to any guild and offering specimens of art or handiwork, to superintend the general affairs of the guilds and to regulate disputes.

There were also two important functionaries, representing the king in criminal and civil matters. The Vicarius capitalis, Scultetus, Schout, Sheriff, or Margrave, took precedence of all magistrates. His business was to superintend criminal arrests, trials, and executions. The Vicarius civilis was called the Amman, and his office corresponded with that of the Podesta in the Frisian and Italian republics. His duties were nearly similar, in civil, to those of his colleague, in criminal matters.

These four branches, with their functionaries and dependents, composed the commonwealth of Antwerp. Assembled together in council, they constituted the great and general court. No tax could be imposed by the sovereign, except with consent of the four branches, all voting separately.

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The personal and domiciliary rights of the citizen were scrupulously guarded. The Schout could only make arrests with the Burgomaster's warrant, and was obliged to bring the accused, within three days, before the judges, whose courts were open to the public.

The condition of the population was prosperous. There were but few poor, and those did not seek but were sought by the almoners: The schools were excellent and cheap. It was difficult to find a child of sufficient age who could not read, write, and speak, at least, two languages. The sons of the wealthier citizens completed their education at Louvain, Douay, Paris, or Padua.

The city itself was one of the most beautiful in Europe. Placed upon a plain along the banks of the Scheld, shaped like a bent bow with the river for its string, it enclosed within its walls some of the most splendid edifices in Christendom. The world-renowned church of Notre Dame, the stately Exchange where five thousand merchants daily congregated, prototype of all similar establishments throughout the world, the capacious mole and port where twenty-five hundred vessels were often seen at once, and where five hundred made their daily entrance or departure, were all establishments which it would have been difficult to rival in any other part of the world.

From what has already been said of the municipal institutions of the country, it may be inferred that the powers of the Estates-general were limited. The members of that congress were not representatives chosen by the people, but merely a few ambassadors from individual provinces. This individuality was not always composed of the same ingredients. Thus, Holland consisted of two members, or branches—the nobles and the six chief cities; Flanders of four branches—the cities, namely, of Ghent, Bruges, Ypres, and the “freedom of Bruges;” Brabant of Louvain, Brussels, Bois le Due, and Antwerp, four great cities, without representation of nobility or clergy; Zeland, of one clerical person, the abbot of Middelburg, one noble, the Marquis of Veer and Vliessingen, and six chief cities; Utrecht, of three branches—the nobility, the clergy, and five cities. These, and other provinces, constituted in similar manner, were supposed to be actually present at the diet when assembled. The chief business of the states-general was financial; the sovereign, or his stadholder, only obtaining supplies by making a request in person, while any single city, as branch of a province, had a right to refuse the grant.

XIII.

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Education had felt the onward movement of the country and the times. The whole system was, however, pervaded by the monastic spirit, which had originally preserved all learning from annihilation, but which now kept it wrapped in the ancient cerecloths, and stiffening in the stony sarcophagus of a bygone age. The university of Louvain was the chief literary institution in the provinces. It had been established in 1423 by Duke John IV. of Brabant. Its government consisted of a President and Senate, forming a close corporation, which had received from the founder all his own authority, and the right to supply their own vacancies. The five faculties of law, canon law, medicine, theology, and the arts, were cultivated at the institution. There was, besides, a high school for under graduates, divided into four classes. The place reeked with pedantry, and the character of the university naturally diffused itself through other scholastic establishments. Nevertheless, it had done and was doing much to preserve the love for profound learning, while the rapidly advancing spirit of commerce was attended by an ever increasing train of humanizing arts.

The standard of culture in those flourishing cities was elevated, compared with that observed in many parts of Europe. The children of the wealthier classes enjoyed great facilities for education in all the great capitals. The classics, music, and the modern languages, particularly the French, were universally cultivated. Nor was intellectual cultivation confined to the higher orders. On the contrary, it was diffused to a remarkable degree among the hard-working artisans and handicraftsmen of the great cities.

For the principle of association had not confined itself exclusively to politics and trade. Besides the numerous guilds by which citizenship was acquired in the various cities, were many other societies for mutual improvement, support, or recreation. The great secret, architectural or masonic brotherhood of Germany, that league to which the artistic and patient completion of the magnificent works of Gothic architecture in the middle ages is mainly to be attributed, had its branches in nether Germany, and explains the presence of so many splendid and elaborately finished churches in the provinces. There were also military sodalities of musketeers, cross-bowmen, archers, swordsmen in every town. Once a year these clubs kept holiday, choosing a king, who was selected for his prowess and skill in the use of various weapons. These festivals, always held with great solemnity and rejoicing, were accompanied by many exhibitions of archery and swordsmanship. The people were not likely, therefore, voluntarily to abandon that privilege and duty of freemen, the right to bear arms, and the power to handle them.

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Another and most important collection of brotherhoods were the so-called guilds of Rhetoric, which existed, in greater or less number, in all the principal cities. These were associations of mechanics, for the purpose of amusing their leisure with poetical effusions, dramatic and musical exhibitions, theatrical processions, and other harmless and not inelegant recreations. Such chambers of rhetoric came originally in the fifteenth century from France. The fact that in their very title they confounded rhetoric with poetry and the drama indicates the meagre attainments of these early “Rederykers.” In the outset of their career they gave theatrical exhibitions. “King Herod and his Deeds” was enacted in the cathedral at Utrecht in 1418. The associations spread with great celerity throughout the Netherlands, and, as they were all connected with each other, and in habits of periodical intercourse, these humble links of literature were of great value in drawing the people of the provinces into closer union. They became, likewise, important political engines. As early as the time of Philip the Good, their songs and lampoons became so offensive to the arbitrary notions of the Burgundian government, as to cause the societies to be prohibited. It was, however, out of the sovereign’s power permanently to suppress institutions, which already partook of the character of the modern periodical press combined with functions resembling the show and licence of the Athenian drama. Viewed from the stand-point of literary criticism their productions were not very commendable in taste, conception, or execution. To torture the Muses to madness, to wire-draw poetry through inextricable coils of difficult rhymes and impossible measures; to hammer one golden grain of wit into a sheet of infinite platitude, with frightful ingenuity to construct ponderous anagrams and preternatural acrostics, to dazzle the vulgar eye with tawdry costumes, and to tickle the vulgar ear with virulent personalities, were tendencies which perhaps smacked of the hammer, the yard-stick and the pincers, and gave sufficient proof, had proof been necessary, that literature is not one of the mechanical arts, and that poetry can not be manufactured to a profit by joint stock companies. Yet, if the style of these lucubrations was often depraved, the artisans rarely received a better example from the literary institutions above them. It was not for guilds of mechanics to give the tone to literature, nor were their efforts in more execrable taste than the emanations from the pedants of Louvain. The “Rhetoricians” are not responsible for all the bad taste of their generation. The gravest historians of the Netherlands often relieved their elephantine labors by the most asinine gambols, and it was not to be expected that these bustling weavers and cutlers should excel their literary superiors in taste or elegance.

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Philip the Fair enrolled himself as a member in one of these societies. It may easily be inferred, therefore, that they had already become bodies of recognized importance. The rhetorical chambers existed in the most obscure villages. The number of yards of Flemish poetry annually manufactured and consumed throughout the provinces almost exceed belief. The societies had regular constitutions. Their presiding officers were called kings, princes, captains, archdeacons, or rejoiced in similar high-sounding names. Each chamber had its treasurer, its buffoon, and its standard-bearer for public processions. Each had its peculiar title or blazon, as the Lily, the Marigold, or the Violet, with an appropriate motto. By the year 1493, the associations had become so important, that Philip the Fair summoned them all to a general assembly at Mechlin. Here they were organized, and formally incorporated under the general supervision of an upper or mother-society of Rhetoric, consisting of fifteen members, and called by the title of "Jesus with the balsam flower."

The sovereigns were always anxious to conciliate these influential guilds by becoming members of them in person. Like the players, the Rhetoricians were the brief abstract and chronicle of the time, and neither prince nor private person desired their ill report. It had, indeed, been Philip's intention to convert them into engines for the arbitrary purposes of his house, but fortunately the publicly organized societies were not the only chambers. On the contrary, the unchartered guilds were the most numerous and influential. They exercised a vast influence upon the progress of the religious reformation, and the subsequent revolt of the Netherlands. They ridiculed, with their farces and their satires, the vices of the clergy. They dramatized tyranny for public execration. It was also not surprising, that among the leaders of the wild anabaptists who disgraced the great revolution in church and state by their hideous antics, should be found many who, like David of Delft, John of Leyden, and others, had been members of rhetorical chambers. The genius for mummery and theatrical exhibitions, transplanted from its sphere, and exerting itself for purposes of fraud and licentiousness, was as baleful in its effects as it was healthy in its original manifestations. Such exhibitions were but the excrescences of a system which had borne good fruit. These literary guilds befitted and denoted a people which was alive, a people which had neither sunk to sleep in the lap of material prosperity, nor abased itself in the sty of ignorance and political servitude. The spirit of liberty pervaded these rude but not illiterate assemblies, and her fair proportions were distinctly visible, even through the somewhat grotesque garb which she thus assumed.

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The great leading recreations which these chambers afforded to themselves and the public, were the periodic jubilees which they celebrated in various capital cities. All the guilds of rhetoric throughout the Netherlands were then invited to partake and to compete in magnificent processions, brilliant costumes, living pictures, charades, and other animated, glittering groups, and in trials of dramatic and poetic skill, all arranged under the superintendence of the particular association which, in the preceding year, had borne away the prize. Such jubilees were called "Land jewels."

From the amusements of a people may be gathered much that is necessary for a proper estimation of its character. No unfavorable opinion can be formed as to the culture of a nation, whose weavers, smiths, gardeners, and traders, found the favorite amusement of their holidays in composing and enacting tragedies or farces, reciting their own verses, or in personifying moral and esthetic sentiments by ingeniously-arranged groups, or gorgeous habiliments. The crimson velvets and yellow satin doublets of the court, the gold-brocaded mantles of priests and princes are often but vulgar drapery of little historic worth. Such costumes thrown around the swart figures of hard-working artisans, for literary and artistic purposes, have a real significance, and are worthy of a closer examination. Were not these amusements of the Netherlands as elevated and humanizing as the contemporary bull-fights and autos-da-fe of Spain? What place in history does the gloomy bigot merit who, for the love of Christ, converted all these gay cities into shambles, and changed the glittering processions of their Land jewels into fettered marches to the scaffold?

Thus fifteen ages have passed away, and in the place of a horde of savages, living among swamps and thickets, swarm three millions of people, the most industrious, the most prosperous, perhaps the most intelligent under the sun. Their cattle, grazing on the bottom of the sea, are the finest in Europe, their agricultural products of more exchangeable value than if nature had made their land to overflow with wine and oil. Their navigators are the boldest, their mercantile marine the most powerful, their merchants the most enterprising in the world. Holland and Flanders, peopled by one race, vie with each other in the pursuits of civilization. The Flemish skill in the mechanical and in the fine arts is unrivalled. Belgian musicians delight and instruct other nations, Belgian pencils have, for a century, caused the canvas to glow with colors and combinations never seen before. Flemish fabrics are exported to all parts of Europe, to the East and West Indies, to Africa. The splendid tapestries, silks, linens, as well as the more homely and useful manufactures of the Netherlands, are prized throughout the world. Most ingenious, as they had already been described by the keen-eyed Caesar, in imitating the arts of other nations, the skillful artificers of the country at Louvain, Ghent, and other places, reproduce the shawls and silks of India with admirable accuracy.

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Their national industry was untiring; their prosperity unexampled; their love of liberty indomitable; their pugnacity proverbial. Peaceful in their pursuits, phlegmatic by temperament, the Netherlands were yet the most belligerent and excitable population of Europe. Two centuries of civil war had but thinned the ranks of each generation without quenching the hot spirit of the nation.

The women were distinguished by beauty of form and vigor of constitution. Accustomed from childhood to converse freely with all classes and sexes in the daily walks of life, and to travel on foot or horseback from one town to another, without escort and without fear, they had acquired manners more frank and independent than those of women in other lands, while their morals were pure and their decorum undoubted. The prominent part to be sustained by the women of Holland in many dramas of the revolution would thus fitly devolve upon a class, enabled by nature and education to conduct themselves with courage.

Within the little circle which encloses the seventeen provinces are 208 walled cities, many of them among the most stately in Christendom, 150 chartered towns, 6,300 villages, with their watch-towers and steeples, besides numerous other more insignificant hamlets; the whole guarded by a belt of sixty fortresses of surpassing strength.

XIV.

Thus in this rapid sketch of the course and development of the Netherland nation during sixteen centuries, we have seen it ever marked by one prevailing characteristic, one master passion—the love of liberty, the instinct of self-government. Largely compounded of the bravest Teutonic elements, Batavian and Frisian, the race ever battles to the death with tyranny, organizes extensive revolts in the age of Vespasian, maintains a partial independence even against the sagacious dominion of Charlemagne, refuses in Friesland to accept the papal yoke or feudal chain, and, throughout the dark ages, struggles resolutely towards the light, wresting from a series of petty sovereigns a gradual and practical recognition of the claims of humanity. With the advent of the Burgundian family, the power of the commons has reached so high a point, that it is able to measure itself, undaunted, with the spirit of arbitrary rule, of which that engrossing and tyrannical house is the embodiment. For more than a century the struggle for freedom, for civic life, goes on; Philip the Good, Charles the Bold, Mary's husband Maximilian, Charles V., in turn, assailing or undermining the bulwarks raised, age after age, against the despotic principle. The combat is ever renewed. Liberty, often crushed, rises again and again from her native earth with redoubled energy. At last, in the 16th century, a new and more powerful spirit, the genius of religious freedom, comes to participate in the great conflict. Arbitrary power, incarnated in the second Charlemagne, assails the new combination

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with unscrupulous, unforgiving fierceness. Venerable civic magistrates; haltered, grovel in sackcloth and ashes; innocent, religious reformers burn in holocausts. By the middle of the century, the battle rages more fiercely than ever. In the little Netherland territory, Humanity, bleeding but not killed, still stands at bay and defies the hunters. The two great powers have been gathering strength for centuries. They are soon to be matched in a longer and more determined combat than the world had ever seen. The emperor is about to leave the stage. The provinces, so passionate for nationality, for municipal freedom, for religious reformation, are to become the property of an utter stranger; a prince foreign to their blood, their tongue, their religion, their whole habits of life and thought.

Such was the political, religious, and social condition of a nation who were now to witness a new and momentous spectacle.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Absolution for incest was afforded at thirty-six livres
Achieved the greatness to which they had not been born
Advancing age diminished his tendency to other carnal pleasures
All his disciples and converts are to be punished with death
All reading of the scriptures (forbidden)
Altercation between Luther and Erasmus, upon predestination
An hereditary papacy, a perpetual pope-emperor
Announced his approaching marriage with the Virgin Mary
As ready as papists, with age, fagot, and excommunication
Attacking the authority of the pope
Bold reformer had only a new dogma in place of the old ones
Charles the Fifth autocrat of half the world
Condemning all heretics to death
Craft meaning, simply, strength
Criminal whose guilt had been established by the hot iron
Criminals buying Paradise for money
Crusades made great improvement in the condition of the serfs
Democratic instincts of the ancient German savages
Denies the utility of prayers for the dead
Difference between liberties and liberty
Dispute between Luther and Zwingli concerning the real presence
Divine right
Drank of the water in which, he had washed
Enormous wealth (of the Church) which engendered the hatred
Erasmus encourages the bold friar

Erasmus of Rotterdam

Even for the rape of God's mother, if that were possible

Executions of Huss and Jerome of Prague

Fable of divine right is invented to sanction the system

Felix Mants, the anabaptist, is drowned at Zurich

Few, even prelates were very dutiful to the pope

Fiction of apostolic authority to bind and loose

Fishermen and river raftsmen become ocean adventurers

For myself I am unworthy of the honor (of martyrdom)

Forbids all private assemblies for devotion

Force clerical—the power of clerks

Great Privilege, the Magna Charta of Holland

Guarantees of forgiveness for every imaginable sin

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Halcyon days of ban, book and candle
Heresy was a plant of early growth in the Netherlands
In Holland, the clergy had neither influence nor seats
Invented such Christian formulas as these (a curse)
July 1st, two Augustine monks were burned at Brussels
King of Zion to be pinched to death with red-hot tongs
Labored under the disadvantage of never having existed
Learn to tremble as little at priestcraft as at swordcraft
Many greedy priests, of lower rank, had turned shop-keepers
No one can testify but a householder
Not of the stuff of which martyrs are made (Erasmus)
Nowhere was the persecution of heretics more relentless
Obstinate, of both sexes, to be burned
One golden grain of wit into a sheet of infinite platitude
Pardon for crimes already committed, or about to be committed
Pardon for murder, if not by poison, was cheaper
Paying their passage through, purgatory
Poisoning, for example, was absolved for eleven ducats
Pope and emperor maintain both positions with equal logic
Power to read and write helped the clergy to much wealth
Readiness to strike and bleed at any moment in her cause
Repentant females to be buried alive
Repentant males to be executed with the sword
Sale of absolutions was the source of large fortunes to the priests
Same conjury over ignorant baron and cowardly hind
Scoffing at the ceremonies and sacraments of the Church
Sharpened the punishment for reading the scriptures in private
Slavery was both voluntary and compulsory
Soldier of the cross was free upon his return
St. Peter's dome rising a little nearer to the clouds
Tanchelyn
The bad Duke of Burgundy, Philip surnamed "the Good,"
The egg had been laid by Erasmus, hatched by Luther
The vivifying becomes afterwards the dissolving principle
Thousands of burned heretics had not made a single convert
Thus Hand-werpen, hand-throwing, became Antwerp
To prefer poverty to the wealth attendant upon trade
Tranquillity of despotism to the turbulence of freedom
Villagers, or villeins

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