

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1584 eBook

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1584 by John Lothrop Motley

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Title: History of the United Netherlands, 1584

Author: John Lothrop Motley

Release Date: January, 2004 [EBook #4837] [Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule] [This file was first posted on April 2, 2002]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

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HISTORY OF THE UNITED NETHERLANDS From the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce—1609

By John Lothrop Motley

MOTLEY'S HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS, Project Gutenberg Edition, Volume 37

History of The United Netherlands, 1584

Preface.

The indulgence with which the History of the Rise of the Dutch Republic was received has encouraged me to prosecute my task with renewed industry.

A single word seems necessary to explain the somewhat increased proportions which the present work has assumed over the original design. The intimate connection which was formed between the Kingdom of England and the Republic of Holland, immediately after the death of William the Silent, rendered the history and the fate of the two commonwealths for a season almost identical. The years of anxiety and suspense during which the great Spanish project for subjugating England and reconquering the Netherlands, by the same invasion, was slowly matured, were of deepest import for the future destiny of those two countries, and for the cause of national liberty. The deep-laid

conspiracy of Spain and Rome against human rights deserves to be patiently examined, for it is one of the great lessons of history. The crisis was long and doubtful, and the health—perhaps the existence—of England and Holland, and, with them, of a great part of Christendom, was on the issue.

History has few so fruitful examples of the dangers which come from superstition and despotism, and the blessings which flow from the maintenance of religious and political freedom, as those afforded by the struggle between England and Holland on the one side, and Spain and Rome on the other, during the epoch which I have attempted to describe. It is for this reason that I have thought it necessary to reveal, as minutely as possible, the secret details of this conspiracy of king and priest against the people, and to show how it was baffled at last by the strong self-helping energy of two free nations combined.

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The period occupied by these two volumes is therefore a short one, when counted by years, for it begins in 1584 and ends with the commencement of 1590. When estimated by the significance of events and their results for future ages, it will perhaps be deemed worthy of the close examination which it has received. With the year 1588 the crisis was past; England was safe, and the new Dutch commonwealth was thoroughly organized. It is my design, in two additional volumes, which, with the two now published, will complete the present work, to carry the history of the Republic down to the Synod of Dort. After this epoch the Thirty Years' War broke out in Germany; and it is my wish, at a future day, to retrace the history of that eventful struggle, and to combine with it the civil and military events in Holland, down to the epoch when the Thirty Years' War and the Eighty Years' War of the Netherlands were both brought to a close by the Peace of Westphalia.

The materials for the volumes now offered to the public were so abundant that it was almost impossible to condense them into smaller compass without doing injustice to the subject. It was desirable to throw full light on these prominent points of the history, while the law of historical perspective will allow long stretches of shadow in the succeeding portions, in which less important objects may be more slightly indicated. That I may not be thought capable of abusing the reader's confidence by inventing conversations, speeches, or letters, I would take this opportunity of stating—although I have repeated the remark in the foot-notes—that no personage in these pages is made to write or speak any words save those which, on the best historical evidence, he is known to have written or spoken.

A brief allusion to my sources of information will not seem superfluous: I have carefully studied all the leading contemporary chronicles and pamphlets of Holland, Flanders, Spain, France, Germany, and England; but, as the authorities are always indicated in the notes, it is unnecessary to give a list of them here. But by far my most valuable materials are entirely unpublished ones.

The archives of England are especially rich for the history of the sixteenth century; and it will be seen, in the course of the narrative, how largely I have drawn from those mines of historical wealth, the State Paper Office and the *Ms.* department of the British Museum. Although both these great national depositories are in admirable order, it is to be regretted that they are not all embraced in one collection, as much trouble might then be spared to the historical student, who is now obliged to pass frequently from the one place to the other, in order to, find different portions of the same correspondence.

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From the royal archives of Holland I have obtained many most important, entirely unpublished documents, by the aid of which I have endeavoured to verify, to illustrate, or sometimes to correct, the recitals of the elder national chroniclers; and I have derived the greatest profit from the invaluable series of Archives and Correspondence of the Orange-Nassau Family, given to the world by M. Groen van Prinsterer. I desire to renew to that distinguished gentleman, and to that eminent scholar M. Bakhuyzen van den Brink, the expression of my gratitude for their constant kindness and advice during my residence at the Hague. Nothing can exceed the courtesy which has been extended to me in Holland, and I am deeply grateful for the indulgence with which my efforts to illustrate the history of the country have been received where that history is best known.

I have also been much aided by the study of a portion of the Archives of Simancas, the originals of which are in the Archives de l'Empire in Paris, and which were most liberally laid before me through the kindness of M. le Comte de La Borde.

I have, further; enjoyed an inestimable advantage in the perusal of the whole correspondence between Philip II., his ministers, and governors, relating to the affairs of the Netherlands, from the epoch at which this work commences down to that monarch's death. Copies of this correspondence have been carefully made from the originals at Simancas by order of the Belgian Government, under the superintendence of the eminent archivist M. Gachard, who has already published a synopsis or abridgment of a portion of it in a French translation. The translation and abridgment of so large a mass of papers, however, must necessarily occupy many years, and it may be long, therefore, before the whole of the correspondence—and particularly that portion of it relating to the epoch occupied by these volumes sees the light. It was, therefore, of the greatest importance for me to see the documents themselves unabridged and untranslated. This privilege has been accorded me, and I desire to express my thanks to his Excellency M. van de Weyer, the distinguished representative of Belgium at the English Court, to whose friendly offices I am mainly indebted for the satisfaction of my wishes in this respect. A letter from him to his Excellency M. Rogier, Minister of the Interior in Belgium—who likewise took the most courteous interest in promoting my views—obtained for me the permission thoroughly to study this correspondence; and I passed several months in Brussels, occupied with reading the whole of it from the year 1584 to the end of the reign of Philip II.

I was thus saved a long visit to the Archives of Simancas, for it would be impossible conscientiously to write the history of the epoch without a thorough examination of the correspondence of the King and his ministers. I venture to hope, therefore—whatever judgment may be passed upon my own labours—that this work may be thought to possess an intrinsic value; for the various materials of which it is composed are original, and—so far as I am aware—have not been made use of by any historical writer.

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I would take this opportunity to repeat my thanks to M. Gachard, Archivist of the kingdom of Belgium, for the uniform courtesy and kindness which I have received at his hands, and to bear my testimony to the skill and critical accuracy with which he has illustrated so many passages of Belgian and Spanish history.

31, *Hertford-street, may-fair*, November 11th 1860.

THE UNITED NETHERLANDS.

CHAPTER I.

Murder of Orange—Extension of Protestantism—Vast Power of Spain— Religious Origin of the Revolt—Disposal of the Sovereignty—Courage of the Estates of Holland—Children of William the Silent— Provisional Council of State—Firm attitude of Holland and Zeeland— Weakness of Flanders—Fall of Ghent—Adroitness of Alexander Farnese.

William the silent, Prince of Orange, had been murdered on the 10th of July, 1534. It is difficult to imagine a more universal disaster than the one thus brought about by the hand of a single obscure fanatic. For nearly twenty years the character of the Prince had been expanding steadily as the difficulties of his situation increased. Habit, necessity, and the natural gifts of the man, had combined to invest him at last with an authority which seemed more than human. There was such general confidence in his sagacity, courage, and purity, that the nation had come to think with his brain and to act with his hand. It was natural that, for an instant, there should be a feeling as of absolute and helpless paralysis.

Whatever his technical attributes in the polity of the Netherlands—and it would be difficult to define them with perfect accuracy—there is no doubt that he stood there, the head of a commonwealth, in an attitude such as had been maintained by but few of the kings, or chiefs, or high priests of history. Assassination, a regular and almost indispensable portion of the working machinery of Philip's government, had produced, in this instance, after repeated disappointments, the result at last which had been so anxiously desired. The ban of the Pope and the offered gold of the King had accomplished a victory greater than any yet achieved by the armies of Spain, brilliant as had been their triumphs on the blood-stained soil of the Netherlands.

Had that "exceeding proud, neat, and spruce" Doctor of Laws, William Parry, who had been busying himself at about the same time with his memorable project against the Queen of England, proved as successful as Balthazar Gerard, the fate of Christendom would have been still darker. Fortunately, that member of Parliament had made the discovery in time— not for himself, but for Elizabeth—that the "Lord was better pleased

with adverbs than nouns;" the well-known result being that the traitor was hanged and the Sovereign saved.

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Yet such was the condition of Europe at that day. A small, dull, elderly, imperfectly-educated, patient, plodding invalid, with white hair and protruding under jaw, and dreary visage, was sitting day after day; seldom speaking, never smiling, seven or eight hours out of every twenty-four, at a writing table covered with heaps of interminable despatches, in a cabinet far away beyond the seas and mountains, in the very heart of Spain. A clerk or two, noiselessly opening and shutting the door, from time to time, fetching fresh bundles of letters and taking away others—all written and composed by secretaries or high functionaries—and all to be scrawled over in the margin by the diligent old man in a big schoolboy's hand and style—if ever schoolboy, even in the sixteenth century, could write so illegibly or express himself so awkwardly; couriers in the court-yard arriving from or departing for the uttermost parts of earth-Asia, Africa America, Europe-to fetch and carry these interminable epistles which contained the irresponsible commands of this one individual, and were freighted with the doom and destiny of countless millions of the world's inhabitants—such was the system of government against which the Netherlands had protested and revolted. It was a system under which their fields had been made desolate, their cities burned and pillaged, their men hanged, burned, drowned, or hacked to pieces; their women subjected to every outrage; and to put an end to which they had been devoting their treasure and their blood for nearly the length of one generation. It was a system, too, which, among other results, had just brought about the death of the foremost statesman of Europe, and had nearly effected simultaneously the murder of the most eminent sovereign in the world. The industrious Philip, safe and tranquil in the depths of the Escorial, saying his prayers three times a day with exemplary regularity, had just sent three bullets through the body of William the Silent at his dining-room door in Delft. “Had it only been done two years earlier,” observed the patient old man, “much trouble might have been spared me; but 'tis better late than never.” Sir Edward Stafford, English envoy in Paris, wrote to his government—so soon as the news of the murder reached him—that, according to his information out of the Spanish minister's own house, “the same practice that had been executed upon the Prince of Orange, there were practisers more than two or three about to execute upon her Majesty, and that within two months.” Without vouching for the absolute accuracy of this intelligence, he implored the Queen to be more upon her guard than ever. “For there is no doubt,” said the envoy, “that she is a chief mark to shoot at; and seeing that there were men cunning enough to enchant a man and to encourage him to kill the Prince of Orange, in the midst of Holland, and that there was a knave found desperate enough to do it, we must think hereafter that anything may be done. Therefore God preserve her Majesty.”

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Invisible as the Grand Lama of Thibet, clothed with power as extensive and absolute as had ever been wielded by the most imperial Caesar, Philip the Prudent, as he grew older and feebler in mind and body seemed to become more gluttonous of work, more ambitious to extend his sceptre over lands which he had never seen or dreamed of seeing, more fixed in his determination to annihilate that monster Protestantism, which it had been the business of his life to combat, more eager to put to death every human creature, whether anointed monarch or humble artisan, that defended heresy or opposed his progress to universal empire.

If this enormous power, this fabulous labour, had, been wielded or performed with a beneficent intention; if the man who seriously regarded himself as the owner of a third of the globe, with the inhabitants thereof, had attempted to deal with these extensive estates inherited from his ancestors with the honest intention of a thrifty landlord, an intelligent slave-owner, it would have yet been possible for a little longer to smile at the delusion, and endure the practice.

But there was another old man, who lived in another palace in another remote land, who, in his capacity of representative of Saint Peter, claimed to dispose of all the kingdoms of the earth—and had been willing to bestow them upon the man who would go down and worship him. Philip stood enfeoffed, by divine decree, of all America, the East Indies, the whole Spanish Peninsula, the better portion of Italy, the seventeen Netherlands, and many other possessions far and near; and he contemplated annexing to this extensive property the kingdoms of France, of England, and Ireland. The Holy League, maintained by the sword of Guise, the pope's ban, Spanish ducats, Italian condottieri, and German mercenaries, was to exterminate heresy and establish the Spanish dominion in France. The same machinery, aided by the pistol or poniard of the assassin, was to substitute for English protestantism and England's queen the Roman Catholic religion and a foreign sovereign. "The holy league," said Duplessis-Mornay, one of the noblest characters of the age, "has destined us all to the name sacrifice. The ambition of the Spaniard, which has overleaped so many lands and seas, thinks nothing inaccessible."

The Netherland revolt had therefore assumed world-wide proportions. Had it been merely the rebellion of provinces against a sovereign, the importance of the struggle would have been more local and temporary. But the period was one in which the geographical land-marks of countries were almost removed. The dividing-line ran through every state, city, and almost every family. There was a country which believed in the absolute power of the church to dictate the relations between man and his Maker, and to utterly exterminate all who disputed that position. There was another country which protested against that doctrine, and claimed, theoretically or practically, a liberty

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of conscience. The territory of these countries was mapped out by no visible lines, but the inhabitants of each, whether resident in France, Germany, England, or Flanders, recognised a relationship which took its root in deeper differences than those of race or language. It was not entirely a question of doctrine or dogma. A large portion of the world had become tired of the antiquated delusion of a papal supremacy over every land, and had recorded its determination, once for all, to have done with it. The transition to freedom of conscience became a necessary step, sooner or later to be taken. To establish the principle of toleration for all religions was an inevitable consequence of the Dutch revolt; although thus far, perhaps only one conspicuous man in advance of his age had boldly announced that doctrine and had died in its defence. But a great true thought never dies—though long buried in the earth—and the day was to come, after long years, when the seed was to ripen into a harvest of civil and religious emancipation, and when the very word toleration was to sound like an insult and an absurdity.

A vast responsibility rested upon the head of a monarch, placed as Philip II. found himself, at this great dividing point in modern history. To judge him, or any man in such a position, simply from his own point of view, is weak and illogical. History judges the man according to its point of view. It condemns or applauds the point of view itself. The point of view of a malefactor is not to excuse robbery and murder. Nor is the spirit of the age to be pleaded in defence of the evil-doer at a time when mortals were divided into almost equal troops. The age of Philip II. was also the age of William of Orange and his four brethren, of Sainte Aldegonde, of Olden-Barneveldt, of Duplessis-Mornay, La Noue, Coligny, of Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin, Walsingham, Sidney, Raleigh, Queen Elizabeth, of Michael Montaigne, and William Shakspeare. It was not an age of blindness, but of glorious light. If the man whom the Maker of the Universe had permitted to be born to such boundless functions, chose to put out his own eyes that he might grope along his great pathway of duty in perpetual darkness, by his deeds he must be judged. The King perhaps firmly believed that the heretics of the Netherlands, of France, or of England, could escape eternal perdition only by being extirpated from the earth by fire and sword, and therefore; perhaps, felt it his duty to devote his life to their extermination. But he believed, still more firmly, that his own political authority, throughout his dominions, and his road to almost universal empire, lay over the bodies of those heretics. Three centuries have nearly past since this memorable epoch; and the world knows the fate of the states which accepted the dogma which it was Philip's life-work to enforce, and of those who protested against the system. The Spanish and Italian Peninsulas have had a different history from that which records the career of France, Prussia, the Dutch Commonwealth, the British Empire, the Transatlantic Republic.

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Yet the contest between those Seven meagre Provinces upon the sand-banks of the North Sea, and—the great Spanish Empire, seemed at the moment with which we are now occupied a sufficiently desperate one. Throw a glance upon the map of Europe. Look at the broad magnificent Spanish Peninsula, stretching across eight degrees of latitude and ten of longitude, commanding the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, with a genial climate, warmed in winter by the vast furnace of Africa, and protected from the scorching heats of summer by shady mountain and forest, and temperate breezes from either ocean. A generous southern territory, flowing with wine and oil, and all the richest gifts of a bountiful nature—splendid cities—the new and daily expanding Madrid, rich in the trophies of the most artistic period of the modern world—Cadiz, as populous at that day as London, seated by the straits where the ancient and modern systems of traffic were blending like the mingling of the two oceans—Granada, the ancient wealthy seat of the fallen Moors—Toledo, Valladolid, and Lisbon, chief city of the recently-conquered kingdom of Portugal, counting, with its suburbs, a larger population than any city, excepting Paris, in Europe, the mother of distant colonies, and the capital of the rapidly-developing traffic with both the Indies—these were some of the treasures of Spain herself. But she possessed Sicily also, the better portion of Italy, and important dependencies in Africa, while the famous maritime discoveries of the age had all enured to her aggrandizement. The world seemed suddenly to have expanded its wings from East to West, only to bear the fortunate Spanish Empire to the most dizzy heights of wealth and power. The most accomplished generals, the most disciplined and daring infantry the world has ever known, the best-equipped and most extensive navy, royal and mercantile, of the age, were at the absolute command of the sovereign. Such was Spain.

Turn now to the north-western corner of Europe. A morsel of territory, attached by a slight sand-hook to the continent, and half-submerged by the stormy waters of the German Ocean—this was Holland. A rude climate, with long, dark, rigorous, winters, and brief summers, a territory, the mere wash of three great rivers, which had fertilized happier portions of Europe only to desolate and overwhelm this less-favoured land, a soil so ungrateful, that if the whole of its four hundred thousand acres of arable land had been sowed with grain, it could not feed the labourers alone, and a population largely estimated at one million of souls—these were the characteristics of the Province which already had begun to give its name to the new commonwealth. The isles of Zeeland—entangled in the coils of deep slow-moving rivers, or combating the ocean without—and the ancient episcopate of Utrecht, formed the only other Provinces that had quite shaken off the foreign yoke. In Friesland, the important city of Groningen was still held for the King, while Bois-le-Duc, Zutphen, besides other places in Gelderland and North Brabant, also in possession of the royalists, made the position of those provinces precarious.

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The limit of the Spanish or “obedient” Provinces, on the one hand, and of the United Provinces on the other, cannot, therefore, be briefly and distinctly stated. The memorable treason—or, as it was called, the “reconciliation” of the Walloon Provinces in the year 1583-4—had placed the Provinces of Hainault, Arthois, Douay, with the flourishing cities Arras, Valenciennes, Lille, Tournay, and others—all Celtic Flanders, in short—in the grasp of Spain. Cambray was still held by the French governor, Seigneur de Balagny, who had taken advantage of the Duke of Anjou’s treachery to the States, to establish himself in an unrecognized but practical petty sovereignty, in defiance both of France and Spain; while East Flanders and South Brabant still remained a disputed territory, and the immediate field of contest. With these limitations, it may be assumed, for general purposes, that the territory of the United States was that of the modern Kingdom of the Netherlands, while the obedient Provinces occupied what is now the territory of Belgium.

Such, then, were the combatants in the great eighty years’ war for civil and religious liberty; sixteen of which had now passed away. On the one side, one of the most powerful and, populous world-empires of history, then in the zenith of its prosperity; on the other hand, a slender group of cities, governed by merchants and artisans, and planted precariously upon a meagre, unstable soil. A million and a half of souls against the autocrat of a third part of the known world. The contest seemed as desperate as the cause was certainly sacred; but it had ceased to be a local contest. For the history which is to occupy us in these volumes is not exclusively the history of Holland. It is the story of the great combat between despotism, sacerdotal and regal, and the spirit of rational human liberty. The tragedy opened in the Netherlands, and its main scenes were long enacted there; but as the ambition of Spain expanded, and as the resistance to the principle which she represented became more general, other nations were, of necessity, involved in the struggle. There came to be one country, the citizens of which were the Leaguers; and another country, whose inhabitants were Protestants. And in this lay the distinction between freedom and absolutism. The religious question swallowed all the others. There was never a period in the early history of the Dutch revolt when the Provinces would not have returned to their obedience, could they have been assured of enjoying liberty of conscience or religious peace; nor was there ever a single moment in Philip II.’s life in which he wavered in his fixed determination never to listen to such a claim. The quarrel was in its nature irreconcilable and eternal as the warfare between wrong and right; and the establishment of a comparative civil liberty in Europe and America was the result of the religious war of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The struggle lasted eighty years, but the prize was worth the contest.

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The object of the war between the Netherlands and Spain was not, therefore, primarily, a rebellion against established authority for the maintenance of civil rights. To preserve these rights was secondary. The first cause was religion. The Provinces had been fighting for years against the Inquisition. Had they not taken arms, the Inquisition would have been established in the Netherlands, and very probably in England, and England might have become in its turn a Province of the Spanish Empire.

The death of William the Silent produced a sudden change in the political arrangements of the liberated Netherlands. During the year 1583, the United Provinces had elected Francis, Duke of Anjou, to be Duke of Brabant and sovereign of the whole country, under certain constitutional provisions enumerated in articles of solemn compact. That compact had been grossly violated. The Duke had made a treacherous attempt to possess himself of absolute power and to seize several important cities. He had been signally defeated in Antwerp, and obliged to leave the country, covered with ignominy. The States had then consulted William of Orange as to the course to be taken in the emergency. The Prince had told them that their choice was triple. They might reconcile themselves with Spain, and abandon the contest for religious liberty which they had so long been waging; they might reconcile themselves with Anjou, notwithstanding that he had so utterly forfeited all claims to their consideration; or they might fight the matter out with Spain single-handed. The last course was, in his opinion, the most eligible one, and he was ready to sacrifice his life to its furtherance. It was, however, indispensable, should that policy be adopted, that much larger supplies should be voted than had hitherto been raised, and, in general, that a much more extensive and elevated spirit of patriotism should manifest itself than had hitherto been displayed.

It was, on the whole, decided to make a second arrangement with the Duke of Anjou, Queen Elizabeth warmly urging that course. At the same time, however, that articles of agreement were drawn up for the installation of Anjou as sovereign of the United Provinces, the Prince had himself consented to accept the title of Count of Holland, under an ample constitutional charter, dictated by his own lips. Neither Anjou nor Orange lived to be inaugurated into the offices thus bestowed upon them. The Duke died at Chateau-Thierry on the 10th June, and the Prince was assassinated a month later at Delft.

What now was the political position of the United Provinces at this juncture? The sovereignty which had been held by the Estates, ready to be conferred respectively upon Anjou and Orange, remained in the hands of the Estates. There was no opposition to this theory. No more enlarged view of the social compact had yet been taken. The people, as such, claimed no sovereignty. Had any champion

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claimed it for them they would hardly have understood him. The nation dealt with facts. After abjuring Philip in 1581—an act which had been accomplished by the Estates—the same Estates in general assembly had exercised sovereign power, and had twice disposed of that sovereign power by electing a hereditary ruler. Their right and their power to do this had been disputed by none, save by the deposed monarch in Spain. Having the sovereignty to dispose of, it seemed logical that the Estates might keep it, if so inclined. They did keep it, but only in trust. While Orange lived, he might often have been elected sovereign of all the Provinces, could he have been induced to consent. After his death, the Estates retained, *ex necessitate*, the sovereignty; and it will soon be related what they intended to do with it. One thing is very certain, that neither Orange, while he lived, nor the Estates, after his death, were actuated in their policy by personal ambition. It will be seen that the first object of the Estates was to dispossess themselves of the sovereignty which had again fallen into their hands.

What were the Estates? Without, at the present moment, any farther inquiries into that constitutional system which had been long consolidating itself, and was destined to exist upon a firmer basis for centuries longer, it will be sufficient to observe, that the great characteristic of the Netherland government was the municipality.

Each Province contained a large number of cities, which were governed by a board of magistrates, varying in number from twenty to forty. This college, called the *Vroedschap* (Assembly of Sages), consisted of the most notable citizens, and was a self-electing body—a close corporation—the members being appointed for life, from the citizens at large. Whenever vacancies occurred from death or loss of citizenship, the college chose new members—sometimes immediately, sometimes by means of a double or triple selection of names, the choice of one from among which was offered to the stadtholder of the province. This functionary was appointed by the Count, as he was called, whether Duke of Bavaria or of Burgundy, Emperor, or King. After the abjuration of Philip, the governors were appointed by the Estates of each Province.

The Sage-Men chose annually a board of senators, or *schepens*, whose functions were mainly judicial; and there were generally two, and sometimes three, burgomasters, appointed in the same way. This was the popular branch of the Estates. But, besides this body of representatives, were the nobles, men of ancient lineage and large possessions, who had exercised, according to the general feudal law of Europe, high, low, and intermediate jurisdiction upon their estates, and had long been recognized as an integral part of the body politic, having the right to appear, through delegates of their order, in the provincial and in the general assemblies.

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Regarded as a machine for bringing the most decided political capacities into the administration of public affairs, and for organising the most practical opposition to the system of religious tyranny, the Netherland constitution was a healthy, and, for the age, an enlightened one. The officeholders, it is obvious, were not greedy for the spoils of office; for it was, unfortunately, often the case that their necessary expenses in the service of the state were not defrayed. The people raised enormous contributions for carrying on the war; but they could not afford to be extremely generous to their faithful servants.

Thus constituted was the commonwealth upon the death of William the Silent. The gloom produced by that event was tragical. Never in human history was a more poignant and universal sorrow for the death of any individual. The despair was, for a brief season, absolute; but it was soon succeeded by more lofty sentiments. It seemed, after they had laid their hero in the tomb, as though his spirit still hovered above the nation which he had loved so well, and was inspiring it with a portion of his own energy and wisdom.

Even on the very day of the murder, the Estates of Holland, then sitting at Delft, passed a resolution “to maintain the good cause, with God’s help, to the uttermost, without sparing gold or blood.” This decree was communicated to Admiral de Warmont, to Count Hohenlo, to William Lewis of Nassau, and to other commanders by land and sea. At the same time, the sixteen members—for no greater number happened to be present at the session—addressed letters to their absent colleagues, informing them of the calamity which had befallen them, summoning them at once to conference, and urging an immediate convocation of the Estates of all the Provinces in General Assembly. They also addressed strong letters of encouragement, mingled with manly condolence, upon the common affliction, to prominent military and naval commanders and civil functionaries, begging them to “bear themselves manfully and valiantly, without faltering in the least on account of the great misfortune which had occurred, or allowing themselves to be seduced by any one from the union of the States.” Among these sixteen were Van Zuylen, Van Nyvelt, the Seigneur de Warmont, the Advocate of Holland, Paul Buys, Joost de Menin, and John van Olden-Barneveldt. A noble example was thus set at once to their fellow citizens by these their representatives—a manful step taken forward in the path where Orange had so long been leading.

The next movement, after the last solemn obsequies had been rendered to the Prince was to provide for the immediate wants of his family. For the man who had gone into the revolt with almost royal revenues, left his estate so embarrassed that his carpets, tapestries, household linen—nay, even his silver spoons, and the very clothes of his wardrobe were disposed of at auction for the benefit of his creditors.

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He left eleven children—a son and daughter by the first wife, a son and daughter by Anna of Saxony, six daughters by Charlotte of Bourbon, and an infant, Frederic Henry, born six months before his death. The eldest son, Philip William, had been a captive in Spain for seventeen years, having been kidnapped from school, in Leyden, in the year 1567. He had already become so thoroughly Hispaniolized under the masterly treatment of the King and the Jesuits, that even his face had lost all resemblance to the type of his heroic family, and had acquired a sinister, gloomy, forbidding expression, most painful to contemplate. All of good that he had retained was a reverence for his father's name—a sentiment which he had manifested to an extravagant extent on a memorable occasion in Madrid, by throwing out of window, and killing on the spot a Spanish officer who had dared to mention the great Prince with insult.

The next son was Maurice, then seventeen years of age, a handsome youth, with dark blue eyes, well-chiselled features, and full red lips, who had already manifested a courage and concentration of character beyond his years. The son of William the Silent, the grandson of Maurice of Saxony, whom he resembled in visage and character, he was summoned by every drop of blood in his veins to do life-long battle with the spirit of Spanish absolutism, and he was already girding himself for his life's work. He assumed at once for his device a fallen oak, with a young sapling springing from its root. His motto, "Tandem fit surculus arbor," "the twig shall yet become a tree"—was to be nobly justified by his career.

The remaining son, then a six months' child, was also destined to high fortunes, and to win an enduring name in his country's history. For the present he remained with his mother, the noble Louisa de Coligny, who had thus seen, at long intervals, her father and two husbands fall victims to the Spanish policy; for it is as certain that Philip knew beforehand, and testified his approbation of, the massacre of St. Bartholomew, as that he was the murderer of Orange.

The Estates of Holland implored the widowed Princess to remain in their territory, settling a liberal allowance upon herself and her child, and she fixed her residence at Leyden.

But her position was most melancholy. Married in youth to the Seigneur de Teligny, a young noble of distinguished qualities, she had soon become both a widow and an orphan in the dread night of St. Bartholomew. She had made her own escape to Switzerland; and ten years afterwards she had united herself in marriage with the Prince of Orange. At the age of thirty-two, she now found herself desolate and wretched in a foreign land, where she had never felt thoroughly at home. The widow and children of William the Silent were almost without the necessities of life. "I hardly know," wrote the Princess to her brother-in-law, Count John, "how the children and I are to maintain

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ourselves according to the honour of the house. May God provide for us in his bounty, and certainly we have much need of it." Accustomed to the more luxurious civilisation of France, she had been amused rather than annoyed, when, on her first arrival in Holland for her nuptials, she found herself making the journey from Rotterdam to Delft in an open cart without springs, instead of the well-balanced coaches to which she had been used, arriving, as might have been expected, "much bruised and shaken." Such had become the primitive simplicity of William the Silent's household. But on his death, in embarrassed circumstances, it was still more straightened. She had no cause either to love Leyden, for, after the assassination of her husband, a brutal preacher, Hakkius by name, had seized that opportunity for denouncing the French marriage, and the sumptuous christening of the infant in January, as the deeds which had provoked the wrath of God and righteous chastisement. To remain there in her widowhood, with that six months' child, "sole pledge of her dead lord, her consolation and only pleasure," as she pathetically expressed herself, was sufficiently painful, and she had been inclined to fix her residence in Flushing, in the edifice which had belonged to her husband, as Marquis of Vere. She had been persuaded, however, to remain in Holland, although "complaining, at first, somewhat of the unkindness of the people."

A small well-formed woman, with delicate features, exquisite complexion, and very beautiful dark eyes, that seemed in after-years, as they looked from beneath her coif, to be dim with unshed tears; with remarkable powers of mind, angelic sweetness of disposition, a winning manner, and a gentle voice, Louisa de Coligny became soon dear to the rough Hollanders, and was ever a disinterested and valuable mistress both to her own child and to his elder brother Maurice.

Very soon afterwards the States General established a State Council, as a provisional executive board, for the term of three months, for the Provinces of Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, and such parts of Flanders and Brabant as still remained in the Union. At the head of this body was placed young Maurice, who accepted the responsible position, after three days' deliberation. The young man had been completing his education, with a liberal allowance from Holland and Zeeland, at the University of Leyden; and such had been their tender care for the child of so many hopes, that the Estates had given particular and solemn warning, by resolution, to his governor during the previous summer, on no account to allow him to approach the sea-shore, lest he should be kidnapped by the Prince of Parma, who had then some war-vessels cruising on the coast.

The salary of Maurice was now fixed at thirty thousand florins a year, while each of the councillors was allowed fifteen hundred annually, out of which stipend he was to support at least one servant; without making any claim for travelling or other incidental expenses.

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The Council consisted of three members from Brabant, two from Flanders, four from Holland, three from Zeeland, two from Utrecht, one from Mechlin, and three from Friesland—eighteen in all. They were empowered and enjoined to levy troops by land and sea, and to appoint naval and military officers; to establish courts of admiralty, to expend the moneys voted by the States, to maintain the ancient privileges of the country, and to see that all troops in service of the Provinces made oath of fidelity to the Union. Diplomatic relations, questions of peace and war, the treaty-making power, were not entrusted to the Council, without the knowledge and consent of the States General, which body was to be convoked twice a year by the State Council.

Thus the Provinces in the hour of danger and darkness were true to themselves, and were far from giving way to a despondency which under the circumstances would not have been unnatural.

For the waves of bitterness were rolling far and wide around them. A medal, struck in Holland at this period, represented a dismayed hulk reeling through the tempest. The motto, “*incertum quo fate ferent*” (who knows whither fate is sweeping her?) expressed most vividly the ship wrecked condition of the country. Alexander of Parma, the most accomplished general and one of the most adroit statesmen of the age, was swift to take advantage of the calamity which had now befallen the rebellious Provinces. Had he been better provided with men and money, the cause of the States might have seemed hopeless. He addressed many letters to the States General, to the magistracies of various cities, and to individuals, affecting to consider that with the death of Orange had died all authority, as well as all motive for continuing the contest with Spain. He offered easy terms of reconciliation with the discarded monarch—always reserving, however, as a matter of course, the religious question—for it was as well known to the States as to Parma that there was no hope of Philip making concessions upon that important point.

In Holland and Zeeland the Prince’s blandishments were of no avail. His letters received in various towns of those Provinces, offered, said one who saw them, “almost every thing they would have or demand, even till they should repent.” But the bait was not taken. Individuals and municipalities were alike stanch, remembering well that faith was not to be kept with heretics. The example was followed by the Estates of other Provinces, and all sent in to the General Assembly, soon in session at Delft, “their absolute and irrevocable authority to their deputies to stand to that which they, the said States General, should dispose of as to their persons, goods and country; a resolution and agreement which never concurred before among them, to this day, in what age or government soever.”

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It was decreed that no motion of agreement “with the tyrant of Spain” should be entertained either publicly or privately, “under pain to be reputed ill patriots.” It was also enacted in the city of Dort that any man that brought letter or message from the enemy to any private person “should be forthwith hanged.” This was expeditious and business-like. The same city likewise took the lead in recording its determination by public act, and proclaiming it by sound of trumpet, “to live and die in the cause now undertaken.”

In Flanders and Brabant the spirit was less noble. Those Provinces were nearly lost already. Bruges seconded Parma’s efforts to induce its sister-city Ghent to imitate its own baseness in surrendering without a struggle; and that powerful, turbulent, but most anarchical little commonwealth was but too ready to listen to the voice of the tempter. “The ducats of Spain, Madam, are trotting about in such fashion,” wrote envoy Des Pruneaux to Catherine de Medici, “that they have vanquished a great quantity of courages. Your Majesties, too, must employ money if you wish to advance one step.” No man knew better than Parma how to employ such golden rhetoric to win back a wavering rebel to his loyalty, but he was not always provided with a sufficient store of those practical arguments.

He was, moreover, not strong in the field, although he was far superior to the States at this contingency. He had, besides his garrisons, something above 18,000 men. The Provinces had hardly 3000 foot and 2500 horse, and these were mostly lying in the neighbourhood of Zutphen. Alexander was threatening at the same time Ghent, Dendermonde, Mechlin, Brussels, and Antwerp. These five powerful cities lie in a narrow circle, at distances varying from six miles to thirty, and are, as it were, strung together upon the Scheldt, by which river, or its tributary, the Senne, they are all threaded. It would have been impossible for Parma, with 100,000 men at his back, to undertake a regular and simultaneous siege of these important places. His purpose was to isolate them from each other and from the rest of the country, by obtaining the control of the great river, and so to reduce them by famine. The scheme was a masterly one, but even the consummate ability of Farnese would have proved inadequate to the undertaking, had not the preliminary assassination of Orange made the task comparatively easy. Treason, faint-heartedness, jealousy, were the fatal allies that the Governor-General had reckoned upon, and with reason, in the council-rooms of these cities. The terms he offered were liberal. Pardon, permission for soldiers to retreat with technical honour, liberty to choose between apostacy to the reformed religion or exile, with a period of two years granted to the conscientious for the winding up of their affairs; these were the conditions, which seemed flattering, now that the well-known voice which had so often silenced the Flemish palterers and intriguers was for ever hushed.

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Upon the 17th August (1584) Dendermonde surrendered, and no lives were taken save those of two preachers, one of whom was hanged, while the other was drowned. Upon the 7th September Vilvoorde capitulated, by which event the water-communication between Brussels and Antwerp was cut off. Ghent, now thoroughly disheartened, treated with Parma likewise; and upon the 17th September made its reconciliation with the King. The surrender of so strong and important a place was as disastrous to the cause of the patriots as it was disgraceful to the citizens themselves. It was, however, the result of an intrigue which had been long spinning, although the thread had been abruptly, and, as it was hoped, conclusively, severed several months before. During the early part of the year, after the reconciliation of Bruges with the King—an event brought about by the duplicity and adroitness of Prince Chimay—the same machinery had been diligently and almost successfully employed to produce a like result in Ghent. Champagny, brother of the famous Cardinal Granvelle, had been under arrest for six years in that city. His imprisonment was not a strict one however; and he avenged himself for what he considered very unjust treatment at the hands of the patriots, by completely abandoning a cause which he had once begun to favour. A man of singular ability, courage, and energy, distinguished both for military and diplomatic services, he was a formidable enemy to the party from which he was now for ever estranged. As early as April of this year, secret emissaries of Parma, dealing with Champagny in his nominal prison, and with the disaffected burghers at large, had been on the point of effecting an arrangement with the royal governor. The negotiation had been suddenly brought to a close by the discovery of a flagrant attempt by Imbue, one of the secret adherents of the King, to sell the city of Dendermonde, of which he was governor, to Parma. For this crime he had been brought to Ghent for trial, and then publicly beheaded. The incident came in aid of the eloquence of Orange, who, up to the latest moment of his life, had been most urgent in his appeals to the patriotic hearts of Ghent, not to abandon the great cause of the union and of liberty. William the Silent knew full well, that after the withdrawal of the great keystone-city of Ghent, the chasm between the Celtic-Catholic and the Flemish-Calvinist Netherlands could hardly be bridged again. Orange was now dead. The negotiations with France, too, on which those of the Ghenters who still held true to the national cause had fastened their hopes, had previously been brought to a stand-still by the death of Anjou; and Champagny, notwithstanding the disaster to Imbize, became more active than ever. A private agent, whom the municipal government had despatched to the French court for assistance, was not more successful than his character and course of conduct would have seemed to warrant; for during his residence in Paris, he had been always drunk, and generally abusive. This was not good diplomacy, particularly on the part of an agent from a weak municipality to a haughty and most undecided government.

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“They found at this court,” wrote Stafford to Walsingham, “great fault with his manner of dealing that was sent from Gaunt. He was scarce sober from one end of the week to the other, and stood so much on his tiptoes to have present answer within three days, or else that they of Gaunt could tell where to bestow themselves. They sent him away after keeping him three weeks, and he went off in great dudgeon, swearing by yea and nay that he will make report thereafter.”

Accordingly, they of Ghent did bestow themselves very soon thereafter upon the King of Spain. The terms were considered liberal, but there was, of course, no thought of conceding the great object for which the patriots were contending—religious liberty. The municipal privileges—such as they might prove to be worth under the interpretation of a royal governor and beneath the guns of a citadel filled with Spanish troops—were to be guaranteed; those of the inhabitants who did not choose to go to mass were allowed two years to wind up their affairs before going into perpetual exile, provided they behaved themselves “without scandal;” while on the other hand, the King’s authority as Count of Flanders was to be fully recognised, and all the dispossessed monks and abbots to be restored to their property.

Accordingly, Champagny was rewarded for his exertions by being released from prison and receiving the appointment of governor of the city: and, after a very brief interval, about one-half of the population, the most enterprising of its merchants and manufacturers, the most industrious of its artizans, emigrated to Holland and Zeeland. The noble city of Ghent—then as large as Paris, thoroughly surrounded with moats, and fortified with bulwarks, ravelins, and counterscarps, constructed of earth, during the previous two years, at great expense, and provided with bread and meat, powder and shot, enough to last a year—was ignominiously surrendered. The population, already a very reduced and slender one for the great extent of the place and its former importance, had been estimated at 70,000. The number of houses was 35,000, so that as the inhabitants were soon farther reduced to one-half, there remained but one individual to each house. On the other hand, the twenty-five monasteries and convents in the town were repeopled—with how much advantage as a set-off to the thousands of spinners and weavers who had wandered away, and who in the flourishing days of Ghent had sent gangs of workmen through the streets “whose tramp was like that of an army”—may be sufficiently estimated by the result.

The fall of Brussels was deferred till March, and that of Mechlin (19th July, 1585) and of Antwerp (19th August, 1585), till Midsummer of the following year; but, the surrender of Ghent (10th March 1585) foreshadowed the fate of Flanders and Brabant. Ostend and Sluys, however, were still in the hands of the patriots, and with them the control of the whole Flemish coast. The command of the sea was destined to remain for centuries with the new republic.

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The Prince of Parma, thus encouraged by the great success of his intrigues, was determined to achieve still greater triumphs with his arms, and steadily proceeded with his large design of closing the Scheldt—and bringing about the fall of Antwerp. The details of that siege—one of the most brilliant military operations of the age and one of the most memorable in its results—will be given, as a connected whole, in a subsequent series of chapters. For the present, it will be better for the reader who wishes a clear view of European politics at this epoch, and of the position of the Netherlands, to give his attention to the web of diplomatic negotiation and court-intrigue which had been slowly spreading over the leading states of Christendom, and in which the fate of the world was involved. If diplomatic adroitness consists mainly in the power to deceive, never were more adroit diplomatists than those of the sixteenth century. It would, however, be absurd to deny them a various range of abilities; and the history of no other age can show more subtle, comprehensive, indefatigable—but, it must also be added, often unscrupulous—intellects engaged in the great game of politics in which the highest interests of millions were the stakes, than were those of several leading minds in England, France, Germany, and Spain. With such statesmen the burgher-diplomatists of the new-born commonwealth had to measure themselves; and the result was to show whether or not they could hold their own in the cabinet as on the field,

For the present, however, the new state was unconscious of its latent importance, The new-risen republic remained for a season nebulous, and ready to unsphere itself so soon as the relative attraction of other great powers should determine its absorption. By the death of Anjou and of Orange the United Netherlands had become a sovereign state, an independent republic; but they stood with that sovereignty in their hands, offering it alternately, not to the highest bidder, but to the power that would be willing to accept their allegiance, on the sole condition of assisting them in the maintenance of their religious freedom.

CHAPTER II.

Relations of the Republic to France—Queen's Severity towards Catholics and Calvinists—Relative Positions of England and France—Timidity of Germany—Apathy of Protestant Germany—Indignation of the Netherlanders—Henry III. of France—The King and his Minions—Henry of Guise—Henry of Navarre—Power of France—Embassy of the States to France—Ignominious position of the Envoys—Views of the French Huguenots—Efforts to procure Annexation—Success of Des Pruneaux.

The Prince of Orange had always favoured a French policy. He had ever felt a stronger reliance upon the support of France than upon that of any other power. This was not unreasonable, and so long as he lived, the tendency of the Netherlands had been in that direction. It had never been the wish of England to acquire the sovereignty of the Provinces. In France on the contrary, the Queen Dowager, Catharine de' Medici had always coveted that sovereignty for her darling Francis of Alencon; and the design had

been favoured, so far as any policy could be favoured, by the impotent monarch who occupied the French throne.

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The religion of the United Netherlands was Calvinistic. There were also many Anabaptists in the country. The Queen of England hated Anabaptists, Calvinists, and other sectarians, and banished them from her realms on pain of imprisonment and confiscation of property. As firmly opposed as was her father to the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome, she felt much of the paternal reluctance to accept the spirit of the Reformation. Henry Tudor hanged the men who believed in the Pope, and burnt alive those who disbelieved in transubstantiation, auricular confession, and the other 'Six Articles.' His daughter, whatever her secret religious convictions, was staunch in her resistance to Rome, and too enlightened a monarch not to see wherein the greatness and glory of England were to be found; but she had no thought of tolerating liberty of conscience. All opposed to the Church of England, whether Papists or Puritans, were denounced as heretics, and as such imprisoned or banished. "To allow churches with contrary rites and ceremonies," said Elizabeth, "were nothing else but to sow religion out of religion, to distract good men's minds, to cherish factious men's humours, to disturb religion and commonwealth, and mingle divine and human things; which were a thing in deed evil, in example worst of all; to our own subjects hurtful, and to themselves—to whom it is granted, neither greatly commodious, nor yet at all safe."—[Camden] The words were addressed, it is true, to Papists, but there is very little doubt that Anabaptists or any other heretics would have received a similar reply, had they, too, ventured to demand the right of public worship. It may even be said that the Romanists in the earlier days of Elizabeth's reign fared better than the Calvinists. The Queen neither banished nor imprisoned the Catholics. She did not enter their houses to disturb their private religious ceremonies, or to inquire into their consciences. This was milder treatment than the burning alive, burying alive, hanging, and drowning, which had been dealt out to the English and the Netherland heretics by Philip and by Mary, but it was not the spirit which William the Silent had been wont to manifest in his measures towards Anabaptists and Papists alike. Moreover, the Prince could hardly forget that of the nine thousand four hundred Catholic ecclesiastics who held benefices at the death of Queen Mary, all had renounced the Pope on the accession of Queen Elizabeth, and acknowledged her as the head of the church, saving only one hundred and eighty-nine individuals. In the hearts of the nine thousand two hundred and eleven others, it might be thought perhaps that some tenderness for the religion from which they had so suddenly been converted, might linger, while it could hardly be hoped that they would seek to inculcate in the minds of their flocks or of their sovereign any connivance with the doctrines of Geneva.

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When, at a later period, the plotting of Catholics, suborned by the Pope and Philip, against the throne and person of the Queen, made more rigorous measures necessary; when it was thought indispensable to execute as traitors those Roman seedlings—seminary priests and their disciples—who went about preaching to the Queen's subjects the duty of carrying out the bull by which the Bishop of Rome had deposed and excommunicated their sovereign, and that "it was a meritorious act to kill such princes as were excommunicate," even then, the men who preached and practised treason and murder experienced no severer treatment than that which other "heretics" had met with at the Queen's hands. Jesuits and Popish priests were, by Act of Parliament, ordered to depart the realm within forty days. Those who should afterwards return to the kingdom were to be held guilty of high treason. Students in the foreign seminaries were commanded to return within six months and recant, or be held guilty of high treason. Parents and guardians supplying money to such students abroad were to incur the penalty of a preamunire—perpetual exile, namely, with loss of all their goods.

Many seminary priests and others were annually executed in England under these laws, throughout the Queen's reign, but nominally at least they were hanged not as Papists, but as traitors; not because they taught transubstantiation, ecclesiastical celibacy, auricular confession, or even Papal supremacy, but because they taught treason and murder—because they preached the necessity of killing the Queen. It was not so easy, however, to defend or even comprehend the banishment and imprisonment of those who without conspiring against the Queen's life or throne, desired to see the Church of England reformed according to the Church of Geneva. Yet there is no doubt that many sectaries experienced much inhuman treatment for such delinquency, both in the early and the later years of Elizabeth's reign.

There was another consideration, which had its due weight in this balance, and that was the respective succession to the throne in the two kingdoms of France and England. Mary Stuart, the Catholic, the niece of the Guises, emblem and exponent of all that was most Roman in Europe, the sworn friend of Philip, the mortal foe to all heresy, was the legitimate successor to Elizabeth. Although that sovereign had ever refused to recognize that claim; holding that to confirm Mary in the succession was to "lay her own winding sheet before her eyes, yea, to make her, own grave, while she liveth and looketh on;" and although the unfortunate claimant of two thrones was a prisoner in her enemy's hands, yet, so long as she lived, there was little security for Protestantism, even in Elizabeth's lifetime, and less still in case of her sudden death. On the other hand, not only were the various politico-religious forces of France kept in equilibrium by their action upon each other—so that it was reasonable to believe that the House of Valois, however Catholic itself, would be always compelled by the fast-expanding strength of French Calvinism, to observe faithfully a compact to tolerate the Netherland churches—but, upon the death of Henry III. the crown would be legitimately placed upon the head of the great champion and chief of the Huguenots, Henry of Navarre.

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It was not unnatural, therefore, that the Prince of Orange, a Calvinist himself, should expect more sympathy with the Netherland reformers in France than in England. A large proportion of the population of that kingdom, including an influential part of the nobility, was of the Huguenot persuasion, and the religious peace, established by royal edict, had endured so long, that the reformers of France and the Netherlands had begun to believe in the royal clemency, and to confide in the royal word. Orange did not live to see the actual formation of the Holy League, and could only guess at its secrets.

Moreover, it should be remembered that France at that day was a more formidable state than England, a more dangerous enemy, and, as it was believed, a more efficient protector. The England of the period, glorious as it was for its own and all future ages, was, not the great British Empire of to-day. On the contrary, it was what would now be considered, statistically speaking, a rather petty power. The England of Elizabeth, Walsingham, Burghley, Drake, and Raleigh, of Spenser and Shakspeare, hardly numbered a larger population than now dwells in its capital and immediate suburbs. It had neither standing army nor considerable royal navy. It was full of conspirators, daring and unscrupulous, loyal to none save to Mary of Scotland, Philip of Spain, and the Pope of Rome, and untiring in their efforts to bring about a general rebellion. With Ireland at its side, nominally a subject province, but in a state of chronic insurrection—a perpetual hot-bed for Spanish conspiracy and stratagem; with Scotland at its back, a foreign country, with half its population exasperated enemies of England, and the rest but doubtful friends, and with the legitimate sovereign of that country, “the daughter of debate, who discord still did sow,”—[Sonnet by Queen Elizabeth.]—a prisoner in Elizabeth’s hands, the central point around which treason was constantly crystallizing itself, it was not strange that with the known views of the Queen on the subject of the reformed Dutch religion, England should seem less desirable as a protector for the Netherlands than the neighbouring kingdom of France.

Elizabeth was a great sovereign, whose genius Orange always appreciated, in a comparatively feeble realm. Henry of Valois was the contemptible monarch of a powerful state, and might be led by others to produce incalculable mischief or considerable good. Notwithstanding the massacre of St. Bartholomew, therefore, and the more recent “French fury” of Antwerp, Orange had been willing to countenance fresh negotiations with France.

Elizabeth, too, it should never be forgotten, was, if not over generous, at least consistent and loyal in her policy towards the Provinces. She was not precisely jealous of France, as has been unjustly intimated on distinguished authority, for she strongly advocated the renewed offer of the sovereignty to Anjou, after his memorable expulsion from the Provinces. At that period, moreover, not only her own love-coquetries with Anjou were over, but he was endeavouring with all his might, though in secret, to make a match with the younger Infanta of Spain. Elizabeth furthered the negotiation with France, both publicly and privately. It will soon be narrated how those negotiations prospered.

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If then England were out of the question, where, except in France, should the Netherlanders, not deeming themselves capable of standing alone, seek for protection and support?

We have seen the extensive and almost ubiquitous power of Spain. Where she did not command as sovereign, she was almost equally formidable as an ally. The Emperor of Germany was the nephew and the brother-in-law of Philip, and a strict Catholic besides. Little aid was to be expected from him or the lands under his control for the cause of the Netherland revolt. Rudolph hated his brother-in-law, but lived in mortal fear of him. He was also in perpetual dread of the Grand Turk. That formidable potentate, not then the "sick man" whose precarious condition and territorial inheritance cause so much anxiety in modern days, was, it is true, sufficiently occupied for the moment in Persia, and had been sustaining there a series of sanguinary defeats. He was all the more anxious to remain upon good terms with Philip, and had recently sent him a complimentary embassy, together with some rather choice presents, among which were "four lions, twelve unicorns, and two horses coloured white, black, and blue." Notwithstanding these pacific manifestations towards the West, however, and in spite of the truce with the German Empire which the Turk had just renewed for nine years,—Rudolph and his servants still trembled at every report from the East.

"He is much deceived," wrote Busbecq, Rudolph's ambassador in Paris, "who doubts that the Turk has sought any thing by this long Persian war, but to protect his back, and prepare the way, after subduing that enemy, to the extermination of all Christendom, and that he will then, with all his might, wage an unequal warfare with us, in which the existence of the Empire will be at stake."

The envoy expressed, at the same period, however, still greater awe of Spain. "It is to no one," he wrote, "endowed with good judgment, in the least obscure, that the Spanish nation, greedy of empire, will never be quiet, even with their great power, but will seek for the dominion of the rest of Christendom. How much remains beyond what they have already acquired? Afterwards, there will soon be no liberty, no dignity, for other princes and republics. That single nation will be arbiter of all things, than which nothing can be more miserable, nothing more degrading. It cannot be doubted that all kings, princes, and states, whose safety or dignity is dear to them, would willingly associate in arms to extinguish the common conflagration. The death of the Catholic king would seem the great opportunity 'miscendis rebus'."

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Unfortunately neither Busbecq's master nor any other king or prince manifested any of this commendable alacrity to "take up arms against the conflagration." Germany was in a shiver at every breeze from East or West-trembling alike before Philip and Amurath. The Papists were making rapid progress, the land being undermined by the steady and stealthy encroachments of the Jesuits. Lord Burghley sent many copies of his pamphlet, in Latin, French, and Italian, against the Seminaries, to Gebhard Truchsess; and the deposed archbishop made himself busy in translating that wholesome production into German, and in dispersing it "all Germany over." The work, setting duly forth "that the executions of priests in England were not for religion but for treason," was "marvellously liked" in the Netherlands. "In uttering the truth," said Herle, "'tis likely to do great good;" and he added, that Duke Augustus of Saxony "did now see so far into the sect of Jesuits, and to their inward mischiefs, as to become their open enemy, and to make friends against them in the Empire."

The love of Truchsess for Agnes Mansfeld had created disaster not only for himself but for Germany. The whole electorate of Cologne had become the constant seat of partisan warfare, and the resort of organised bands of brigands. Villages were burned and rifled, highways infested, cities threatened, and the whole country subjected to perpetual black mail (*brandschatzung*)—fire-insurance levied by the incendiaries in person—by the supporters of the rival bishops. Truchsess had fled to Delft, where he had been countenanced and supported by Orange. Two cities still held for him, Rheinberg and Neuss. On the other hand, his rival, Ernest of Bavaria; supported by Philip II., and the occasional guest of Alexander of Parma, had not yet succeeded in establishing a strong foothold in the territory. Two pauper archbishops, without men or means of their own, were thus pushed forward and back, like puppets, by the contending highwaymen on either side; while robbery and murder, under the name of Protestantism or Catholicism, were for a time the only motive or result of the contest.

Thus along the Rhine, as well as the Maas and the Scheldt, the fires of civil war were ever burning. Deeper within the heart of Germany, there was more tranquillity; but it was the tranquillity rather of paralysis than of health. A fearful account was slowly accumulating, which was evidently to be settled only by one of the most horrible wars which history has ever recorded. Meantime there was apathy where there should have been enthusiasm; parsimony and cowardice where generous and combined effort were more necessary than ever; sloth without security. The Protestant princes, growing fat and contented on the spoils of the church, lent but a deaf ear to the moans of Truchsess, forgetting that their neighbour's blazing roof was likely soon to fire their own. "They understand better, 'proximus sum egomet mild'," wrote Lord Willoughby from Kronenburg, "than they have learned, 'humani nihid a me alienum puto'. These German princes continue still in their lethargy, careless of the state of others, and dreaming of their ubiquity, and some of them, it is thought, inclining to be Spanish or Popish more of late than heretofore."

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The beggared archbishop, more forlorn than ever since the death of his great patron, cried woe from his resting-place in Delft, upon Protestant Germany. His tones seemed almost prophetic of the thirty years' wrath to blaze forth in the next generation.

"Courage is wanting to the people throughout Germany," he wrote to William Lewis of Nassau. "We are becoming the laughing-stock of the nations. Make sheep of yourselves, and the wolf will eat you. We shall find our destruction in our immoderate desire for peace. Spain is making a Papistical league in Germany. Therefore is Assonleville despatched thither, and that's the reason why our trash of priests are so insolent in the empire. 'Tis astonishing how they are triumphing on all sides. God will smite them. Thou dear God! What are our evangelists about in Germany? Asleep on both ears. 'Dormiunt in utramque aurem'. I doubt they will be suddenly enough awakened one day, and the cry will be, 'Who'd have thought it?' Then they will be for getting oil for the lamp, for shutting the stable-door when the steed is stolen," and so on, with a string of homely proverbs worthy of Sancho Panza, or landgrave William of Hesse.

In truth, one of the most painful features is the general aspect of affairs was the coldness of the German Protestants towards the Netherlands. The enmity between Lutherans and Calvinists was almost as fatal as that between Protestants and Papists. There was even a talk, at a little later period, of excluding those of the "reformed" church from the benefits of the peace of Passau. The princes had got the Augsburg confession and the abbey-lands into the bargain; the peasants had got the Augsburg confession without the abbey-lands, and were to believe exactly what their masters believed. This was the German-Lutheran sixteenth-century idea of religious freedom. Neither prince nor peasant stirred in behalf of the struggling Christians in the United Provinces, battling, year after year, knee-deep in blood, amid blazing cities and inundated fields, breast to breast with the yellow jerkined pikemen of Spain and Italy, with the axe and the faggot and the rack of the Holy Inquisition distinctly visible behind them. Such were the realities which occupied the Netherlanders in those days, not watery beams of theological moonshine, fantastical catechism-making, intermingled with scenes of riot and wantonness, which drove old John of Nassau half frantic; with banquetting and guzzling, drinking and devouring, with unchristian flaunting and wastefulness of apparel, with extravagant and wanton dancing, and other lewd abominations; all which, the firm old reformer prophesied, would lead to the destruction of Germany.

For the mass, slow moving but apparently irresistible, of Spanish and papistical absolutism was gradually closing over Christendom. The Netherlands were the wedge by which alone the solid bulk could be riven asunder. It was the cause of German, of French, of English liberty, for which the Provinces were contending. It was not surprising that they were bitter, getting nothing in their hour of distress from the land of Luther but dogmas and Augsburg catechisms instead of money and gunpowder, and seeing German reiters galloping daily to reinforce the army of Parma in exchange for Spanish ducats.

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Brave old La Noue, with the iron arm, noblest of Frenchmen and Huguenots—who had just spent five years in Spanish bondage, writing military discourses in a reeking dungeon, filled with toads and vermin, after fighting the battle of liberty for a life-time, and with his brave son already in the Netherlands emulating his father's valour on the same field—denounced at a little later day, the lukewarmness of Protestant Germany with whimsical vehemence:—"I am astounded," he cried, "that these princes are not ashamed of themselves; doing nothing while they see the oppressed cut to pieces at their gates. When will God grant me grace to place me among those who are doing their duty, and afar from those who do nothing, and who ought to know that the cause is a common one. If I am ever caught dancing the German cotillon, or playing the German flute, or eating pike with German sauce, I hope it may be flung in my teeth."

The great league of the Pope and Philip was steadily consolidating itself, and there were but gloomy prospects for the counter-league in Germany. There was no hope but in England and France. For the reasons already indicated, the Prince of Orange, taking counsel with the Estates, had resolved to try the French policy once more. The balance of power in Europe, which no man in Christendom so well understood as he, was to be established by maintaining (he thought) the equilibrium between France and Spain. In the antagonism of those two great realms lay the only hope for Dutch or European liberty. Notwithstanding the treason of Anjou, therefore, it had been decided to renew negotiations with that Prince. On the death of the Duke, the envoys of the States were accordingly instructed to make the offer to King Henry III. which had been intended for his brother. That proposition was the sovereignty of all the Netherlands, save Holland and Zeeland, under a constitution maintaining the reformed religion and the ancient laws and privileges of the respective provinces.

But the death of Francis of Anjou had brought about a considerable change in French policy. It was now more sharply defined than ever, a right-angled triangle of almost mathematical precision. The three Henrys and their partizans divided the realm into three hostile camps—threatening each other in simulated peace since the treaty of Fleig (1580), which had put an end to the "lover's war" of the preceding year,—Henry of Valois, Henry of Guise, and Henry of Navarre.

Henry III., last of the Valois line, was now thirty-three years of age. Less than king, less even than man, he was one of those unfortunate personages who seem as if born to make the idea of royalty ridiculous, and to test the capacity of mankind to eat and drink humiliation as if it were wholesome food. It proved how deeply engraved in men's minds of that century was the necessity of kingship, when the hardy Netherlanders, who had abjured one tyrant, and had been fighting a generation long rather than return to him, were now willing to accept the sovereignty of a thing like Henry of Valois.

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He had not been born without natural gifts, such as Heaven rarely denies to prince or peasant; but the courage which he once possessed had been exhausted on the field of Moncontour, his manhood had been left behind him at Venice, and such wit as Heaven had endowed him withal was now expended in darting viperous epigrams at court-ladies whom he was only capable of dishonouring by calumny, and whose charms he burned to outrival in the estimation of his minions. For the monarch of France was not unfrequently pleased to attire himself like a woman and a harlot. With silken flounces, jewelled stomacher, and painted face, with pearls of great price adorning his bared neck and breast, and satin-slippered feet, of whose delicate shape and size he was justly vain, it was his delight to pass his days and nights in a ceaseless round of gorgeous festivals, tourneys, processions; masquerades, banquets, and balls, the cost of which glittering frivolities caused the popular burthen and the popular execration to grow, from day to day, more intolerable and more audible. Surrounded by a gang of “minions,” the most debauched and the most desperate of France, whose bedizened dresses exhaled perfumes throughout Paris, and whose sanguinary encounters dyed every street in blood, Henry lived a life of what he called pleasure, careless of what might come after, for he was the last of his race. The fortunes of his minions rose higher and higher, as their crimes rendered them more and more estimable in the eyes of a King who took a woman’s pride in the valour of such champions to his weakness, and more odious to a people whose miserable homes were made even more miserable, that the coffers of a few court-favourites might be filled: Now sauntering, full-dressed, in the public promenades, with ghastly little death’s heads strung upon his sumptuous garments, and fragments of human bones dangling among his orders of knighthood—playing at cup and ball as he walked, and followed by a few select courtiers who gravely pursued the same exciting occupation—now presiding like a queen of beauty at a tournament to assign the prize of valour, and now, by the advice of his mother, going about the streets in robes of penitence, telling his beads as he went, that the populace might be edified by his piety, and solemnly offering up prayers in the churches that the blessing of an heir might be vouchsafed to him,—Henry of Valois seemed straining every nerve in order to bring himself and his great office into contempt.

As orthodox as he was profligate, he hated the Huguenots, who sought his protection and who could have saved his throne, as cordially as he loved the Jesuits, who passed their lives in secret plottings against his authority and his person, or in fierce denunciations from the Paris pulpits against his manifold crimes. Next to an exquisite and sanguinary fop, he dearly loved a monk. The presence of a friar, he said, exerted as agreeable an effect upon his mind as the most delicate and gentle tickling could produce upon his body; and he was destined to have a fuller dose of that charming presence than he coveted.

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His party—for he was but the nominal chief of a faction, 'tanquam unus ex nobis'—was the party in possession—the office-holders' party; the spoilsmen, whose purpose was to rob the exchequer and to enrich themselves. His minions—for the favourites were called by no other name—were even more hated, because less despised than the King. Attired in cloth of gold—for silk and satin were grown too coarse a material for them—with their little velvet porringer-caps stuck on the sides of their heads, with their long hair stiff with pomatum, and their heads set inside a well-starched ruff a foot wide, "like St. John's head in a charger," as a splenetic contemporary observed, with a nimbus of musk and violet-powder enveloping them as they passed before vulgar mortals, these rapacious and insolent courtiers were the impersonation of extortion and oppression to the Parisian populace. They were supposed, not unjustly, to pass their lives in dancing, blasphemy, dueling, dicing, and intrigue, in following the King about like hounds, fawning at his feet, and showing their teeth to all besides; and for virtues such as these they were rewarded by the highest offices in church, camp, and state, while new taxes and imposts were invented almost daily to feed their avarice and supply their extravagance. France, doomed to feel the beak and talons of these harpies in its entrails, impoverished by a government that robbed her at home while it humiliated her abroad, struggled vainly in its misery, and was now on the verge of another series of internecine combats—civil war seeming the only alternative to a voluptuous and licentious peace.

"We all stood here at gaze," wrote ambassador Stafford to Walsingham, "looking for some great matter to come of this sudden journey to Lyons; but, as far as men can find, 'parturient montes', for there hath been nothing but dancing and banquetting from one house to another, bravery in apparel, glittering like the sun." He mentioned that the Duke of Epemon's horse, taking fright at a red cloak, had backed over a precipice, breaking his own neck, while his master's shoulder merely was put out of joint. At the same time the Duke of Joyeuse, coming over Mount Cenis, on his return from Savoy, had broken his wrist. The people, he said, would rather they had both broken their necks "than any other joint, the King having racked the nation for their sakes, as he hath-done." Stafford expressed much compassion for the French in the plight in which they found themselves. "Unhappy people!" he cried, "to have such a King, who seeketh nothing but to impoverish them to enrich a couple, and who careth not what cometh after his death, so that he may rove on while he liveth, and careth neither for doing his own estate good nor his neighbour's state harm." Sir Edward added, however, in a philosophizing vein, worthy of Corporal Nym, that, "seeing we cannot be so happy as to have a King to concur with us to do us any good, yet we are happy to have one that his humour serveth him not to concur with others to do us harm; and 'tis a wisdom for us to follow these humours, that we may keep him still in that humour, and from hearkening to others that may egg him on to worse."

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It was a dark hour for France, and rarely has a great nation been reduced to a lower level by a feeble and abandoned government than she was at that moment under the distaff of Henry III. Society was corrupted to its core. "There is no more truth, no more justice, no more mercy," moaned President L'Etoile. "To slander, to lie, to rob, to wench, to steal; all things are permitted save to do right and to speak the truth." Impiety the most cynical, debauchery the most unveiled, public and unpunished homicides, private murders by what was called magic, by poison, by hired assassins, crimes natural, unnatural, and preternatural, were the common characteristics of the time. All posts and charges were venal. Great offices of justice were sold to the highest bidder, and that which was thus purchased by wholesale was retailed in the same fashion. Unhappy the pauper client who dreamed of justice at the hands of law. The great ecclesiastical benefices were equally matter of merchandise, and married men, women, unborn children, enjoyed revenues as dignitaries of the church. Infants came into the world, it was said, like the mitre-fish, stamped with the emblems of place.

"'Twas impossible," said L'Etoile, "to find a crab so tortuous and backsliding as the government."

This was the aspect of the first of the three factions in France. Such was the Henry at its head, the representative of royalty.

Henry with the Scar, Duke of Guise, the well-known chief of the house of Lorraine, was the chief of the extreme papistical party. He was now thirty-four years of age, tall, stately, with a dark, martial face and dangerous eyes, which Antonio Moro loved to paint; a physiognomy made still more expressive by the arquebus-shot which had damaged his left cheek at the fight near Chateau-Thierry and gained him his name of Balafre. Although one of the most turbulent and restless plotters of that plotting age, he was yet thought more slow and heavy in character than subtle, Teutonic rather than Italian. He was the idol of the Parisian burghers. The grocers, the market-men, the members of the arquebus and crossbow clubs, all doated on him. The fishwomen worshipped him as a god. He was the defender of the good old religion under which Paris and the other cities of France had thriven, the uncompromising opponent of the new-fangled doctrines which western clothiers, and dyers, and tapestry-workers, had adopted, and which the nobles of the mountain-country, the penniless chevaliers of Bearn and Gascony and Guienne, were ceaselessly taking the field and plunging France into misery and bloodshed to support. But for the Balafre and Madam League—as the great Spanish Catholic conspiracy against the liberties of France, and of England, and of all Europe, was affectionately termed by the Paris populace—honest Catholics would fare no better in France than they did in England, where, as it was well known, they were every day subjected

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to fearful tortures: The shopwindows were filled with coloured engravings, representing, in exaggerated fashion, the sufferings of the English Catholics under bloody Elizabeth, or Jezebel, as she was called; and as the gaping burghers stopped to ponder over these works of art, there were ever present, as if by accident, some persons of superior information who would condescendingly explain the various pictures, pointing out with a long stick the phenomena most worthy of notice. These caricatures proving highly successful, and being suppressed by order of government, they were repeated upon canvas on a larger scale, in still more conspicuous situations, as if in contempt of the royal authority, which sullied itself by compromise with Calvinism! The pulpits, meanwhile, thundered denunciations on the one hand against the weak and wicked King, who worshipped idols, and who sacrificed the dearly-earned pittance of his subjects to feed the insolent pomp of his pampered favourites; and on the other, upon the arch-heretic, the arch-apostate, the Bearnese Huguenot, who, after the death of the reigning monarch, would have the effrontery to claim his throne, and to introduce into France the persecutions and the horrors under which unhappy England was already groaning.

The scarce-concealed instigator of these assaults upon the royal and upon the Huguenot faction was, of course, the Duke of Guise,—the man whose most signal achievement had been the Massacre of St. Bartholomew—all the preliminary details of that transaction having been arranged by his skill. So long as Charles IX. was living, the Balafre had created the confusion which was his element, by entertaining and fomenting the perpetual intrigues of Anjou and Alencon against their brother; while the altercations between them and the Queen Mother and the furious madman who then sat upon the throne, had been the cause of sufficient disorder and calamity for France. On the death of Charles IX. Guise had sought the intimacy of Henry of Navarre, that by his means he might frustrate the hopes of Alencon for the succession. During the early period of the Bearnese's residence at the French court the two had been inseparable, living together, going to the same festivals, tournaments, and masquerades, and even sleeping in the same bed. "My master," was ever Guise's address to Henry; "my gossip," the young King of Navarre's reply. But the crafty Bearnese had made use of the intimacy only to read the secrets of the Balafre's heart; and on Navarre's flight from the court, and his return to Huguenotism, Guise knew that he had been played upon by a subtler spirit than his own. The simulated affection was now changed into undisguised hatred. Moreover, by the death of Alencon, Navarre now stood next the throne, and Guise's plots became still more extensive and more open as his own ambition to usurp the crown on the death of the childless Henry III. became more fervid.

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Thus, by artfully inflaming the populace of Paris, and through his organized bands of confederates—that of all the large towns of France, against the Huguenots and their chief, by appeals to the religious sentiment; and at the same time by stimulating the disgust and indignation of the tax-payers everywhere at the imposts and heavy burthens which the boundless extravagance of the court engendered, Guise paved the way for the advancement of the great League which he represented. The other two political divisions were ingeniously represented as mere insolent factions, while his own was the true national and patriotic party, by which alone the ancient religion and the cherished institutions of France could be preserved.

And the great chief of this national patriotic party was not Henry of Guise, but the industrious old man who sat writing despatches in the depths of the Escorial. Spanish counsels, Spanish promises, Spanish ducats—these were the real machinery by which the plots of Guise against the peace of France and of Europe were supported. Madam League was simply Philip II. Nothing was written, officially or unofficially, to the French government by the Spanish court that was not at the same time communicated to “Mucio”—as the Duke of Guise was denominated in the secret correspondence of Philip, and Mucio was in Philip’s pay, his confidential agent, spy, and confederate, long before the actual existence of the League was generally suspected.

The Queen-Mother, Catharine de’ Medici, played into the Duke’s hands. Throughout the whole period of her widowhood, having been accustomed to govern her sons, she had, in a certain sense, been used to govern the kingdom. By sowing dissensions among her own children, by inflaming party against party, by watching with care the oscillations of France —so than none of the great divisions should obtain preponderance—by alternately caressing and massacring the Huguenots, by cajoling or confronting Philip, by keeping, as she boasted, a spy in every family that possessed the annual income of two thousand livres, by making herself the head of an organized system of harlotry, by which the soldiers and politicians of France were inveigled, their secrets faithfully revealed to her by her well-disciplined maids of honour, by surrounding her unfortunate sons with temptation from earliest youth, and plunging them by cold calculation into deepest debauchery, that their enervated faculties might be ever forced to rely in political affairs on the maternal counsel, and to abandon the administration to the maternal will; such were the arts by which Catharine had maintained her influence, and a great country been governed for a generation—Machiavellian state-craft blended with the more simple wiles of a procuress.

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Now that Alencon was dead, and Henry III. hopeless of issue, it was her determination that the children of her daughter, the Duchess of Lorraine, should succeed to the throne. The matter was discussed as if the throne were already vacant, and Guise and the Queen-Mother, if they agreed in nothing else, were both cordial in their detestation of Henry of Navarre. The Duke affected to support the schemes in favour of his relatives, the Princes of Lorraine, while he secretly informed the Spanish court that this policy was only a pretence. He was not likely, he said, to advance the interests of the younger branch of a house of which he was himself the chief, nor were their backs equal to the burthen. It was necessary to amuse the old queen, but he was profoundly of opinion that the only sovereign for France, upon the death of Henry, was Philip II. himself. This was the Duke's plan of arriving, by means of Spanish assistance, at the throne of France; and such was Henry le Balafre, chief of the League.

And the other Henry, the Huguenot, the Bearnese, Henry of Bourbon, Henry of Navarre, the chieftain of the Gascon chivalry, the king errant, the hope and the darling of the oppressed Protestants in every land—of him it is scarce needful to say a single word. At his very name a figure seems to leap forth from the mist of three centuries, instinct with ruddy vigorous life. Such was the intense vitality of the Bearnese prince, that even now he seems more thoroughly alive and recognizable than half the actual personages who are fretting their hour upon the stage.

We see, at once, a man of moderate stature, light, sinewy, and strong; a face browned with continual exposure; small, mirthful, yet commanding blue eyes, glittering from beneath an arching brow, and prominent cheekbones; a long hawk's nose, almost resting upon a salient chin, a pendent moustache, and a thick, brown, curly beard, prematurely grizzled; we see the mien of frank authority and magnificent good humour, we hear the ready sallies of the shrewd Gascon mother-wit, we feel the electricity which flashes out of him, and sets all hearts around him on fire, when the trumpet sounds to battle. The headlong desperate charge, the snow-white plume waving where the fire is hottest, the large capacity for enjoyment of the man, rioting without affectation in the 'certaminis gaudia', the insane gallop, after the combat, to lay its trophies at the feet of the Cynthia of the minute, and thus to forfeit its fruits; all are as familiar to us as if the seven distinct wars, the hundred pitched battles, the two hundred sieges; in which the Bearnese was personally present, had been occurrences of our own day.

He at least was both king and man, if the monarch who occupied the throne was neither. He was the man to prove, too, for the instruction of the patient letter-writer of the Escorial, that the crown of France was to be won with foot in stirrup and carbine in hand, rather than to be caught by the weaving and casting of the most intricate nets of diplomatic intrigue, though thoroughly weighted with Mexican gold.

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The King of Navarre was now thirty-one years old; for the three Henrys were nearly of the same age. The first indications of his existence had been recognized amid the cannon and trumpets of a camp in Picardy, and his mother had sung a gay Bearnese song as he was coming into the world at Pau. Thus, said his grandfather, Henry of Navarre, thou shalt not bear to us a morose and sulky child. The good king, without a kingdom, taking the child, as soon as born, in the lappel of his dressing-gown, had brushed his infant lips with a clove of garlic, and moistened them with a drop of generous Gascon wine. Thus, said the grandfather again, shall the boy be both merry and bold. There was something mythologically prophetic in the incidents of his birth.

The best part of Navarre had been long since appropriated by Ferdinand of Aragon. In France there reigned a young and warlike sovereign with four healthy boys. But the new-born infant had inherited the lilies of France from St. Louis, and a later ancestor had added to the escutcheon the motto "Espoir." His grandfather believed that the boy was born to revenge upon Spain the wrongs of the House of Albret, and Henry's nature seemed ever pervaded with Robert of Clermont's device.

The same sensible grandfather, having different views on the subject of education from those manifested by Catherine de Medici towards her children, had the boy taught to run about bare-headed and bare-footed, like a peasant, among the mountains and rocks of Bearn, till he became as rugged as a young bear, and as nimble as a kid. Black bread, and beef, and garlic, were his simple fare; and he was taught by his mother and his grandfather to hate lies and liars, and to read the Bible.

When he was fifteen, the third religious war broke out. Both his father and grandfather were dead. His mother, who had openly professed the reformed faith, since the death of her husband, who hated it, brought her boy to the camp at Rochelle, where he was received as the chief of the Huguenots. His culture was not extensive. He had learned to speak the truth, to ride, to shoot, to do with little sleep and less food. He could also construe a little Latin, and had read a few military treatises; but the mighty hours of an eventful life were now to take him by the hand, and to teach him much good and much evil, as they bore him onward. He now saw military treatises expounded practically by professors, like his uncle Condo, and Admiral Coligny, and Lewis Nassau, in such lecture-rooms as Laudun, and Jarnac, and Montcontour, and never was apter scholar.

The peace of Arnay-le-Duc succeeded, and then the fatal Bartholomew marriage with the Messalina of Valois. The faith taught in the mountains of Bearn was no buckler against the demand of "the mass or death," thundered at his breast by the lunatic Charles, as he pointed to thousands of massacred Huguenots. Henry yielded to such conclusive arguments, and became a Catholic. Four years of court imprisonment succeeded, and the young King of Navarre, though proof to the artifices of his gossip Guise, was not adamant to the temptations spread for him by Catherine de' Medici. In the harem entertained for him in the Louvre many pitfalls entrapped him; and he became a stock-performer in the state comedies and tragedies of that plotting age.

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A silken web of palace-politics, palace-diplomacy, palace revolutions, enveloped him. Schemes and counter-schemes, stratagems and conspiracies, assassinations and poisonings; all the state-machinery which worked so exquisitely in fair ladies' chambers, to spread havoc and desolation over a kingdom, were displayed before his eyes. Now campaigning with one royal brother against Huguenots, now fighting with another on their side, now solicited by the Queen-Mother to attempt the life of her son, now implored by Henry III. to assassinate his brother, the Bearnese, as fresh antagonisms, affinities; combinations, were developed, detected, neutralized almost daily, became rapidly an adept in Medicean state-chemistry. Charles IX. in his grave, Henry III. on the throne, Alencon in the Huguenot camp—Henry at last made his escape. The brief war and peace of Monsieur succeeded, and the King of Navarre formally abjured the Catholic creed. The parties were now sharply defined. Guise mounted upon the League, Henry astride upon the Reformation, were prepared to do battle to the death. The temporary "war of the amorous" was followed by the peace of Fleix.

Four years of peace again; four fat years of wantonness and riot preceding fourteen hungry famine-stricken years of bloodiest civil war. The voluptuousness and infamy of the Louvre were almost paralleled in vice, if not in splendour, by the miniature court at Pau. Henry's Spartan grandfather would scarce have approved the courses of the youth, whose education he had commenced on so simple a scale. For Margaret of Valois, hating her husband, and living in most undisguised and promiscuous infidelity to him, had profited by her mother's lessons. A seraglio of maids of honour ministered to Henry's pleasures, and were carefully instructed that the peace and war of the kingdom were playthings in their hands. While at Paris royalty was hopelessly sinking in a poisonous marsh, there was danger that even the hardy nature of the Bearnese would be mortally enervated by the atmosphere in which he lived.

The unhappy Henry III., baited by the Guises, worried by Alencon and his mother, implored the King of Navarre to return to Paris and the Catholic faith. M. de Segur, chief of Navarre's council, who had been won over during a visit to the capital, where he had made the discovery that "Henry III. was an angel, and his ministers devils," came back to Pau, urging his master's acceptance of the royal invitation. Henry wavered. Bold D'Aubigne, stanchest of Huguenots, and of his friends, next day privately showed Segur a palace-window opening on a very steep precipice over the Bayae, and cheerfully assured him that he should be flung from it did he not instantly reverse his proceedings, and give his master different advice. If I am not able to do the deed myself, said D'Aubigne, here are a dozen more to help me. The chief of the council cast a glance behind him, saw a number of grim Puritan soldiers, with their hats plucked down upon their brows, looking very serious; so made his bow, and quite changed his line of conduct.

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At about the same time, Philip II. confidentially offered Henry of Navarre four hundred thousand crowns in hand, and twelve hundred thousand yearly, if he would consent to make war upon Henry III. Mucio, or the Duke of Guise, being still in Philip's pay, the combination of Leaguers and Huguenots against the unfortunate Valois would, it was thought, be a good triangular contest.

But Henry—no longer the unsophisticated youth who had been used to run barefoot among the cliffs of Coarasse—was grown too crafty a politician to be entangled by Spanish or Medicean wiles. The Duke of Anjou was now dead. Of all the princes who had stood between him and the throne, there was none remaining save the helpless, childless, superannuated youth, who was its present occupant. The King of Navarre was legitimate heir to the crown of France. "Espoir" was now in letters of light upon his shield, but he knew that his path to greatness led through manifold dangers, and that it was only at the head of his Huguenot chivalry that he could cut his way. He was the leader of the nobles of Gascony, and Dauphins, and Guienne, in their mountain fastnesses, of the weavers, cutlers, and artizans, in their thriving manufacturing and trading towns. It was not Spanish gold, but carbines and cutlasses, bows and bills, which could bring him to the throne of his ancestors.

And thus he stood the chieftain of that great austere party of Huguenots, the men who went on, their knees before the battle, beating their breasts with their iron gauntlets, and singing in full chorus a psalm of David, before smiting the Philistines hip and thigh.

Their chieftain, scarcely their representative—fit to lead his Puritans on the battle-field, was hardly a model for them elsewhere. Yet, though profligate in one respect, he was temperate in every other. In food, wine, and sleep, he was always moderate. Subtle and crafty in self-defence, he retained something of his old love of truth, of his hatred for liars. Hardly generous perhaps, he was a friend of justice, while economy in a wandering King, like himself, was a necessary virtue, of which France one day was to feel the beneficent action. Reckless and headlong in appearance, he was in truth the most careful of men. On the religious question, most cautious of all, he always left the door open behind him, disclaimed all bigotry of opinion, and earnestly implored the Papists to seek, not his destruction, but his instruction. Yet prudent as he was by nature in every other regard, he was all his life the slave of one woman or another, and it was by good luck rather than by sagacity that he did not repeatedly forfeit the fruits of his courage and conduct, in obedience to his master-passion.

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Always open to conviction on the subject of his faith, he repudiated the appellation of heretic. A creed, he said, was not to be changed like a shirt, but only on due deliberation, and under special advice. In his secret heart he probably regarded the two religions as his chargers, and was ready to mount alternately the one or the other, as each seemed the more likely to bear him safely in the battle. The Bearnese was no Puritan, but he was most true to himself and to his own advancement. His highest principle of action was to reach his goal, and to that principle he was ever loyal. Feeling, too, that it was the interest of France that he should succeed, he was even inspired—compared with others on the stage—by an almost lofty patriotism.

Amiable by nature and by habit, he had preserved the most unimpaired good-humour throughout the horrible years which succeeded St. Bartholomew, during which he carried his life in his hand, and learned not to wear his heart upon his sleeve. Without gratitude, without resentment, without fear, without remorse, entirely arbitrary, yet with the capacity to use all men's judgments; without convictions, save in regard to his dynastic interests, he possessed all the qualities, necessary to success. He knew how to use his enemies. He knew how to use his friends, to abuse them, and to throw them away. He refused to assassinate Francis Alencon at the bidding of Henry III., but he attempted to procure the murder of the truest of his own friends, one of the noblest characters of the age—whose breast showed twelve scars received in his services—Agrippa D'Aubigne, because the honest soldier had refused to become his pimp—a service the King had implored upon his knees.

Beneath the mask of perpetual careless good-humour, lurked the keenest eye, a subtle, restless, widely combining brain, and an iron will. Native sagacity had been tempered into consummate elasticity by the fiery atmosphere in which feebler natures had been dissolved. His wit was as flashing and as quickly unsheathed as his sword. Desperate, apparently reckless temerity on the battle-field was deliberately indulged in, that the world might be brought to recognise a hero and chieftain in a King. The do-nothings of the Merovingian line had been succeeded by the Pepins; to the effete Carolingians had come a Capet; to the impotent Valois should come a worthier descendant of St. Louis. This was shrewd Gascon calculation, aided by constitutional fearlessness. When despatch-writing, invisible Philips, stargazing Rudolphs, and petticoated Henrys, sat upon the thrones of Europe, it was wholesome to show the world that there was a King left who could move about in the bustle and business of the age, and could charge as well as most soldiers at the head of his cavalry; that there was one more sovereign fit to reign over men, besides the glorious Virgin who governed England.

Thus courageous, crafty, far-seeing, consistent, untiring, imperturbable, he was born to command, and had a right to reign. He had need of the throne, and the throne had still more need of him.

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This then was the third Henry, representative of the third side of the triangle, the reformers of the kingdom.

And before this bubbling cauldron of France, where intrigues, foreign and domestic, conflicting ambitions, stratagems, and hopes, were whirling in never-ceasing tumult, was it strange if the plain Netherland envoys should stand somewhat aghast?

Yet it was necessary that they should ponder well the aspect of affairs; for all their hopes, the very existence of themselves and of their religion, depended upon the organization which should come of this chaos.

It must be remembered, however, that those statesmen—even the wisest or the best-informed of them—could not take so correct a view of France and its politics as it is possible for us, after the lapse of three centuries, to do. The interior leagues, subterranean schemes, conflicting factions, could only be guessed at; nor could the immediate future be predicted, even by such far-seeing politicians as William of Orange; at a distance, or Henry of Navarre, upon the spot.

It was obvious to the Netherlanders that France, although torn by faction, was a great and powerful realm. There had now been, with the brief exception of the lovers' war in 1580, a religious peace of eight years' duration. The Huguenots had enjoyed tranquil exercise of their worship during that period, and they expressed perfect confidence in the good faith of the King. That the cities were inordinately taxed to supply the luxury of the court could hardly be unknown to the Netherlanders. Nevertheless they knew that the kingdom was the richest and most populous of Christendom, after that of Spain. Its capital, already called by contemporaries the "compendium of the world," was described by travellers as "stupendous in extent and miraculous for its numbers." It was even said to contain eight hundred thousand souls; and although, its actual population did not probably exceed three hundred and twenty thousand, yet this was more than double the number of London's inhabitants, and thrice as many as Antwerp could then boast, now that a great proportion of its foreign denizens had been scared away. Paris was at least by one hundred thousand more populous than any city of Europe, except perhaps the remote and barbarous Moscow, while the secondary cities of France, Rouen in the north, Lyons in the centre, and Marseilles in the south, almost equalled in size, business, wealth, and numbers, the capitals of other countries. In the whole kingdom were probably ten or twelve millions of inhabitants, nearly as many as in Spain, without her colonies, and perhaps three times the number that dwelt in England.

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In a military point of view, too, the alliance of France was most valuable to the contiguous Netherlands. A few regiments of French troops, under the command of one of their experienced Marshals, could block up the Spaniards in the Walloon Provinces, effectually stop their operations against Ghent, Antwerp, and the other great cities of Flanders and Brabant, and, with the combined action of the United Provinces on the north, so surround and cripple the forces of Parma, as to reduce the power of Philip, after a few vigorous and well-concerted blows, to an absolute nullity in, the Low Countries. As this result was of as vital importance to the real interests of France and of Europe, whether Protestant or Catholic, as it was to the Provinces, and as the French government had privately manifested a strong desire to oppose the progress of Spain towards universal empire, it was not surprising that the States General, not feeling capable of standing alone, should make their application to France. This they had done with the knowledge and concurrence of the English government. What lay upon the surface the Netherland statesmen saw and pondered well. What lurked beneath, they surmised as shrewdly as they could, but it was impossible, with plummet and fathom-line ever in hand, to sound the way with perfect accuracy, where the quicksands were ever shifting, and the depth or shallowness of the course perpetually varying. It was not easy to discover the intentions of a government which did not know its own intentions, and whose changing policy was controlled by so many hidden currents.

Moreover, as already indicated, the envoys and those whom they represented had not the same means of arriving at a result as are granted to us. Thanks to the liberality of many modern governments of Europe, the archives where the state-secrets of the buried centuries have so long mouldered, are now open to the student of history. To him who has patience and industry many mysteries are thus revealed, which no political sagacity or critical acumen could have divined. He leans over the shoulder of Philip the Second at his writing-table, as the King spells patiently out, with cipher-key in hand, the most concealed hieroglyphics of Parma or Guise or Mendoza. He reads the secret thoughts of "Fabius,"—[The name usually assigned to Philip himself in the Paris-Simancas Correspondence.]—as that cunctative Roman scrawls his marginal apostilles on each despatch; he pries into all the stratagems of Camillus, Hortensius, Mucius, Julius, Tullius, and the rest of those ancient heroes who lent their names to the diplomatic masqueraders of the 16th century; he enters the cabinet of the deeply-pondering Burghley, and takes from the most private drawer the memoranda which record that minister's unutterable doubtings; he pulls from the dressing-gown folds of the stealthy, softly-gliding Walsingham the last secret which he has picked from the Emperor's pigeon-holes, or the Pope's pocket, and which,

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not Hatton, nor Buckhurst, nor Leicester, nor the Lord Treasurer, is to see; nobody but Elizabeth herself; he sits invisible at the most secret councils of the Nassaus and Barneveldt and Buys, or pores with Farnese over coming victories, and vast schemes of universal conquest; he reads the latest bit of scandal, the minutest characteristic of king or minister, chronicled by the gossiping Venetians for the edification of the Forty; and, after all this prying and eavesdropping, having seen the cross-purposes, the bribings, the windings, the fencings in the dark, he is not surprised, if those who were systematically deceived did not always arrive at correct conclusions.

Noel de Caron, Seigneur de Schoneval, had been agent of the States at the French court at the time of the death of the Duke of Anjou. Upon the occurrence of that event, La Mouillerie and Asseliers were deputed by the Provinces to King Henry III., in order to offer him the sovereignty, which they had intended to confer upon his brother. Meantime that brother, just before his death, and with the privity of Henry, had been negotiating for a marriage with the younger daughter of Philip II.—an arrangement somewhat incompatible with his contemporaneous scheme to assume the sovereignty of Philip's revolted Provinces. An attempt had been made at the same time to conciliate the Duke of Savoy, and invite him to the French court; but the Duc de Joyeuse, then on his return from Turin, was bringing the news, not only that the match with Anjou was not favored—which, as Anjou was dead, was of no great consequence—but that the Duke of Savoy was himself to espouse the Infanta, and was therefore compelled to decline the invitation to Paris, for fear of offending his father-in-law. Other matters were in progress, to be afterwards indicated, very much interfering with the negotiations of the Netherland envoys.

When La Mouillerie and Asseliers arrived at Rouen, on their road from Dieppe to Paris, they received a peremptory order from the Queen-Mother to proceed no farther. This prohibition was brought by an unofficial personage, and was delivered, not to them, but to Des Pruneaux, French envoy to the States General, who had accompanied the envoys to France.

After three weeks' time, during which they "kept themselves continually concealed in Rouen," there arrived in that city a young nephew of Secretary Brulart, who brought letters empowering him to hear what they had in charge for the King. The envoys, not much flattered by such cavalier treatment on the part of him to, whom they were offering a crown, determined to digest the affront as they best might, and, to save time, opened the whole business to this subordinate stripling. He received from them accordingly an ample memoir to be laid before his Majesty, and departed by the post the same night. Then they waited ten days longer, concealed as if they had been thieves or spies, rather than the representatives of a friendly power, on a more than friendly errand.

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At last, on the 24th July 1854, after the deputies had been thus shut up a whole month, Secretary Brulart himself arrived from Fontainebleau.

He stated that the King sent his royal thanks to the States for the offer which they had made him, and to the deputies in particular for taking the trouble of so long a journey; but that he did not find his realm in condition to undertake a foreign war so inopportune. In every other regard, his Majesty offered the States "all possible favours and pleasures."

Certainly, after having been thus kept in prison for a month, the ambassadors had small cause to be contented with this very cold communication. To be forbidden the royal presence, and to be turned out of the country without even an official and accredited answer to a communication in which they had offered the sovereignty of their fatherland, was not flattering to their dignity. "We little thought," said they to Brulart, after a brief consultation among themselves, "to receive such a reply as this. It displeases us infinitely that his Majesty will not do us the honour to grant us an audience. We must take the liberty of saying, that 'tis treating the States, our masters, with too much contempt. Who ever heard before of refusing audience to public personages? Kings often grant audience to mere letter-carriers. Even the King of Spain never refused a hearing to the deputies from the Netherlands when they came to Spain to complain of his own government. The States General have sent envoys to many other kinds and princes, and they have instantly granted audience in every case. His Majesty, too, has been very ill-informed of the contracts which we formerly made with the Duke of Anjou, and therefore a personal interview is the more necessary." As the envoys were obstinate on the point of Paris, Brulart said "that the King, although he should himself be at Lyons, would not prevent any one from going to the capital on his own private affairs; but would unquestionably take it very ill if, they should visit that city in a public manner, and as deputies."

Des Pruneaux professed himself "very grievous at this result, and desirous of a hundred deaths in consequence."

They stated that they should be ready within a month to bring an army of 3,000 horse and 13,000 foot into the field for the relief of Ghent, besides their military operations against Zutphen; and that the enemy had recently been ignominiously defeated in his attack upon Fort Lille, and had lost 2,000 of his best soldiers.

Here were encouraging facts; and it certainly was worth the while of the French sovereign to pause a moment before rejecting without a hearing, the offer of such powerful and conveniently-situated provinces.

Des Pruneaux, a man of probity and earnestness, but perhaps of insufficient ability to deal with such grave matters as now fell almost entirely upon his shoulders, soon afterwards obtained audience of the King. Being most sincerely in favour of the

annexation of the Netherlands to France, and feeling that now or never was the opportunity of bringing it about, he persuaded the King to send him back to the Provinces, in order to continue the negotiation directly with the States General. The timidity and procrastination of the court could be overcome no further.

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The two Dutch envoys, who had stolen secretly to Paris, were indulged in a most barren and unmeaning interview with the Queen-Mother. Before their departure from France, however, they had the advantage of much conversation with leading members of the royal council, of the parliaments of Paris and Rouen, and also with various persons professing the reformed religion. They endeavoured thus to inform themselves, as well as they could, why the King made so much difficulty in accepting their propositions, and whether, and by what means, his Majesty could be induced to make war in their behalf upon the King of Spain.

They were informed that, should Holland and Zeeland unite with the rest of the Netherlands, the King “without any doubt would undertake the cause most earnestly.” His councillors, also—even those who had been most active in dissuading his Majesty from such a policy—would then be unanimous in supporting the annexation of the Provinces and the war with Spain. In such a contingency, with the potent assistance of Holland and Zeeland, the King would have little difficulty, within a very short time, in chasing every single Spaniard out of the Netherlands. To further this end, many leading personages in France avowed to the envoys their determination “to venture their lives and their fortunes, and to use all the influence which they possessed at court.”

The same persons expressed their conviction that the King, once satisfied by the Provinces as to conditions and reasons, would cheerfully go into the war, without being deterred by any apprehension as to the power of Spain. It was, however, fitting that each Province should chaffer as little as possible about details, but should give his Majesty every reasonable advantage. They should remember that they were dealing with “a great, powerful monarch, who was putting his realm in jeopardy, and not with a Duke of Anjou, who had every thing to gain and nothing to lose.”

All the Huguenots, with whom the envoys conversed, were excessively sanguine. Could the King be once brought they said, to promise the Netherlands his protection, there was not the least fear but that he would keep his word. He would use all the means within his power; “yea, he would take the crown from his head,” rather than turn back. Although reluctant to commence a war with so powerful a sovereign, having once promised his help, he would keep his pledge to the utmost, “for he was a King of his word,” and had never broken and would never break his faith with those of the reformed religion.

Thus spoke the leading Huguenots of France, in confidential communication with the Netherland envoys, not many months before the famous edict of extermination, published at Nemours.

At that moment the reformers were full of confidence; not foreseeing the long procession of battles and sieges which was soon to sweep through the land. Notwithstanding the urgency of the Papists for their extirpation, they extolled loudly the liberty of religious worship which Calvinists, as well as Catholics, were enjoying in

France, and pointed to the fact that the adherents of both religions were well received at court, and that they shared equally in offices of trust and dignity throughout the kingdom.

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The Netherland envoys themselves bore testimony to the undisturbed tranquillity and harmony in which the professors of both religions were living and worshipping side by side “without reproach or quarrel” in all the great cities which they had visited. They expressed the conviction that the same toleration would be extended to all the Provinces when under French dominion; and, so far as their ancient constitutions and privileges were concerned, they were assured that the King of France would respect and maintain them with as much fidelity as the States could possibly desire.

Des Pruneaux, accompanied by the two States’ envoys, departed forthwith for the Netherlands. On the 24th August, 1584 he delivered a discourse before the States General, in which he disclosed, in very general terms, the expectations of Henry III., and intimated very clearly that the different Provinces were to lose no time in making an unconditional offer to that monarch. With regard to Holland and Zeeland he observed that he was provided with a special commission to those Estates. It was not long before one Province after the other came to the conclusion to offer the sovereignty to the King without written conditions, but with a general understanding that their religious freedom and their ancient constitutions were to be sacredly respected. Meantime, Des Pruneaux made his appearance in Holland and Zeeland, and declared the King’s intentions of espousing the cause of the States, and of accepting the sovereignty of all the Provinces. He distinctly observed, however, that it was as sovereign, not as protector, that his Majesty must be recognised in Holland and Zeeland, as well as in the rest of the country.

Upon this grave question there was much debate and much difference of opinion. Holland and Zeeland had never contemplated the possibility of accepting any foreign sovereignty, and the opponents of the present scheme were loud and angry, but very reasonable in their remarks.

The French, they said, were no respecters of privileges nor of persons. The Duke of Anjou had deceived William of Orange and betrayed the Provinces. Could they hope to see farther than that wisest and most experienced prince? Had not the stout hearts of the Antwerp burghers proved a stronger defence to Brabant liberties than the “joyous entry” on the dread day of the “French fury,” it would have fared ill then and for ever with the cause of freedom and religion in the Netherlands. The King of France was a Papist, a Jesuit. He was incapable of keeping his pledges. Should they make the arrangement now proposed and confer the sovereignty upon him, he would forthwith make peace with Spain, and transfer the Provinces back to that crown in exchange for the duchy of Milan, which France had ever coveted. The Netherlands, after a quarter of a century of fighting in defence of their hearths and altars, would find themselves handed over again, bound and fettered, to the tender mercies of the Spanish Inquisition.

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The Kings of France and of Spain always acted in concert, for religion was the most potent of bonds. Witness the sacrifice of thousands of French soldiers to Alva by their own sovereign at Mons, witness the fate of Genlis, witness the bloody night of St. Bartholomew, witness the Antwerp fury. Men cited and relied upon the advice of William of Orange as to this negotiation with France. But Orange never dreamed of going so far as now proposed. He was ever careful to keep the Provinces of Holland and Zeeland safe from every foreign master. That spot was to be holy ground. Not out of personal ambition. God forbid that they, should accuse his memory of any such impurity, but because he wished one safe refuge for the spirit of freedom.

Many years long they had held out by land and sea against the Spaniards, and should they now, because this Des Pruneaux shrugged his shoulders, be so alarmed as to open the door to the same Spaniard wearing the disguise of a Frenchman?

Prince Maurice also made a brief representation to the States' Assembly of Holland, in which, without distinctly opposing the negotiation with France, he warned them not to proceed too hastily with so grave a matter. He reminded them how far they had gone in the presentation of the sovereignty to his late father, and requested them, in their dealings with France, not to forget his interests and those of his family. He reminded them of the position of that family, overladen with debt contracted in their service alone. He concluded by offering most affectionately his service in any way in which he, young and inexperienced as he knew himself to be, might be thought useful; as he was long since resolved to devote his life to the welfare of his country.

These passionate appeals were answered with equal vehemence by those who had made up their minds to try the chances of the French sovereignty. Des Pruneaux, meanwhile, was travelling from province to province, and from city to city, using the arguments which have already been sufficiently indicated, and urging a speedy compliance with the French King's propositions. At the same time, in accordance with his instructions, he was very cautious to confine himself to generalities, and to avoid hampering his royal master with the restrictions which had proved so irksome to the Duke of Anjou.

"The States General demanded a copy of my speech," he wrote the day after that harangue had been delivered, "but I only gave them a brief outline; extending myself [25th August, 1584] as little as I possibly could, according to the intention and command of your Majesty. When I got here, I found them without hope of our assistance, and terribly agitated by the partizans of Spain. There was some danger of their going over in a panic to the enemy. They are now much changed again, and the Spanish partizans are beginning to lose their tongues. I invite them, if they intend to address your Majesty, to proceed

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as they ought towards a veritably grand monarch, without hunting up any of their old quibbles, or reservations of provinces, or any thing else which could inspire suspicion. I have sent into Gelderland and Friesland, for I find I must stay here in Holland and Zeeland myself. These two provinces are the gates and ramparts through which we must enter. 'Tis, in my opinion, what could be called superb, to command all the sea, thus subject to the crown of France. And France, too, with assistance of this country, will command the land as well. They are much astonished here, however, that I communicate nothing of the intention of your Majesty. They say that if your Majesty does not accept this offer of their country, your Majesty puts the rope around their necks."

The French envoy was more and more struck with the brilliancy of the prize offered to his master. "If the King gets these Provinces," said he to Catharine, "'t will be the most splendid inheritance which Prince has ever conquered."

In a very few weeks the assiduity of the envoy and of the French party was successful. All the other provinces had very soon repeated the offer which they had previously made through Asseliers and La Mouillerie. By the beginning of October the opposition of Holland was vanquished. The estates of that Province—three cities excepted, however—determined "to request England and France to assume a joint protectorate over the Netherlands. In case the King of France should refuse this proposition, they were then ready to receive him as prince and master, with knowledge and consent of the Queen of England, and on such conditions as the United States should approve."

Immediately afterwards, the General Assembly of all the States determined to offer the sovereignty to King Henry "on conditions to be afterwards settled."

Des Pruneaux, thus triumphant, received a gold chain of the value of two thousand florins, and departed before the end of October for France.

The departure of the solemn embassy to that country, for the purpose of offering the sovereignty to the King, was delayed till the beginning of January. Meantime it is necessary to cast a glance at the position of England in relation to these important transactions.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Diplomatic adroitness consists mainly in the power to deceive
Enmity between Lutherans and Calvinists
Find our destruction in our immoderate desire for peace
German-Lutheran sixteenth-century idea of religious freedom



Intentions of a government which did not know its own intentions
Lord was better pleased with adverbs than nouns
Make sheep of yourselves, and the wolf will eat you
Necessity of kingship
Neighbour's blazing roof was likely soon to fire their own
Nor is the spirit of the age to be pleaded in defence
Pauper client who dreamed of justice at the hands of law
Seem as if born to make the idea of royalty ridiculous
Shutting the stable-door when the steed is stolen
String of homely proverbs worthy of Sancho Panza
The very word toleration was to sound like an insult
There was apathy where there should have been enthusiasm
Tranquillity rather of paralysis than of health
Write so illegibly or express himself so awkwardly

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