

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1585b eBook

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1585b by John Lothrop Motley

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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 39

History of The United Netherlands, 1585

CHAPTER V., Part 1.

Position and Character of Farnese—Preparations for Antwerp Siege— Its Characteristics—Foresight of William the Silent—Sainte Aldegonde, the Burgomaster—Anarchy in Antwerp—Character of Sainte Aldegonde—Admiral Treslong—Justinus de Nassau—Hohenlo—Opposition to the Plan of Orange—Liefkenshoek—Head—Quarters of Parma at Kalloo—Difficulty of supplying the City—Results of not piercing the Dykes—Preliminaries of the Siege—Successes of the Spaniards— Energy of Farnese with Sword and Pen—His Correspondence with the Antwerpens—Progress of the Bridge—Impoverished Condition of Parma —Patriots attempt Bois-le-Duc—Their Misconduct—Failure of the Enterprise—The Scheldt Bridge completed—Description of the Structure

The negotiations between France and the Netherlands have been massed, in order to present a connected and distinct view of the relative attitude of the different countries of Europe. The conferences and diplomatic protocolling had resulted in nothing positive; but it is very necessary for the reader to understand the negative effects of all this dissimulation and palace-politics upon the destiny of the new commonwealth, and upon Christendom at large. The League had now achieved a great triumph; the King of France had virtually abdicated, and it was now requisite for the King of Navarre, the Netherlands, and Queen Elizabeth, to draw more closely together than before, if the last hope of forming a counter-league were not to be abandoned. The next step in political combination was therefore a solemn embassy of the States-General to England. Before detailing those negotiations, however, it is proper to direct attention to the external public events which had been unrolling themselves in the Provinces, contemporaneously with the secret history which has been detailed in the preceding chapters.

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By presenting in their natural groupings various distinct occurrences, rather than by detailing them in strict chronological order, a clearer view of the whole picture will be furnished than could be done by intermingling personages, transactions, and scenery, according to the arbitrary command of Time alone.

The Netherlands, by the death of Orange, had been left without a head. On the other hand, the Spanish party had never been so fortunate in their chief at any period since the destiny of the two nations had been blended with each other. Alexander Farnese, Prince of Parma, was a general and a politician, whose character had been steadily ripening since he came into the command of the country. He was now thirty-seven years of age—with the experience of a sexagenarian. No longer the impetuous, arbitrary, hot-headed youth, whose intelligence and courage hardly atoned for his insolent manner and stormy career, he had become pensive, modest, almost gentle. His genius was rapid in conception, patient in combination, fertile in expedients, adamant in the endurance or suffering; for never did a heroic general and a noble army of veterans manifest more military virtue in the support of an infamous cause than did Parma and his handful of Italians and Spaniards. That which they considered to be their duty they performed. The work before them they did with all their might.

Alexander had vanquished the rebellion in the Celtic provinces, by the masterly diplomacy and liberal bribery which have been related in a former work. Artois, Hainault, Douay, Orchies, with the rich cities of Lille, Tournay, Valenciennes, Arras, and other important places, were now the property of Philip. These unhappy and misguided lands, however, were already reaping the reward of their treason. Beggared, trampled upon, plundered, despised, they were at once the prey of the Spaniards, and the cause that their sister-states, which still held out, were placed in more desperate condition than ever. They were also, even in their abject plight, made still more forlorn by the forays of Balagny, who continued in command of Cambray. Catharine de' Medici claimed that city as her property, by will of the Duke of Anjou. A strange title—founded upon the treason and cowardice of her favourite son—but one which, for a time, was made good by the possession maintained by Balagny. That usurper meantime, with a shrewd eye to his own interests, pronounced the truce of Cambray, which was soon afterwards arranged, from year to year, by permission of Philip, as a “most excellent milch-cow;” and he continued to fill his pails at the expense of the “reconciled” provinces, till they were thoroughly exhausted.

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This large south-western section of the Netherlands being thus permanently re-annexed to the Spanish crown, while Holland, Zeeland, and the other provinces, already constituting the new Dutch republic, were more obstinate in their hatred of Philip than ever, there remained the rich and fertile territory of Flanders and Brabant as the great debateable land. Here were the royal and political capital, Brussels, the commercial capital, Antwerp, with Mechlin, Dendermonde, Vilvoorde, and other places of inferior importance, all to be struggled for to the death. With the subjection of this district the last bulwark between the new commonwealth and the old empire would be overthrown, and Spain and Holland would then meet face to face.

If there had ever been a time when every nerve in Protestant Christendom should be strained to weld all those provinces together into one great commonwealth, as a bulwark for European liberty, rather than to allow them to be broken into stepping-stones, over which absolutism could stride across France and Holland into England, that moment had arrived. Every sacrifice should have been cheerfully made by all Netherlands, the uttermost possible subsidies and auxiliaries should have been furnished by all the friends of civil and religious liberty in every land to save Flanders and Brabant from their impending fate.

No man felt more keenly the importance of the business in which he was engaged than Parma. He knew his work exactly, and he meant to execute it thoroughly. Antwerp was the hinge on which the fate of the whole country, perhaps of all Christendom, was to turn. "If we get Antwerp," said the Spanish soldiers—so frequently that the expression passed into a proverb—"you shall all go to mass with us; if you save Antwerp, we will all go to conventicle with you."

Alexander rose with the difficulty and responsibility of his situation. His vivid, almost poetic intellect formed its schemes with perfect distinctness. Every episode in his great and, as he himself termed it, his "heroic enterprise," was traced out beforehand with the tranquil vision of creative genius; and he was prepared to convert his conceptions into reality, with the aid of an iron nature that never knew fatigue or fear.

But the obstacles were many. Alexander's master sat in his cabinet with his head full of Mucio, Don Antonio, and Queen Elizabeth; while Alexander himself was left neglected, almost forgotten. His army was shrinking to a nullity. The demands upon him were enormous, his finances delusive, almost exhausted. To drain an ocean dry he had nothing but a sieve. What was his position? He could bring into the field perhaps eight or ten thousand men over and above the necessary garrisons. He had before him Brussels, Antwerp, Mechlin, Ghent, Dendermonde, and other powerful places, which he was to subjugate. Here was a problem not easy of solution. Given an army of eight thousand, more or less, to reduce therewith in the least possible time, half-a-dozen cities; each containing fifteen or twenty thousand men able to bear arms. To besiege these places in form was obviously a mere chimera. Assault, battery, and surprises—these were all out of the question.

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Yet Alexander was never more truly heroic than in this position of vast entanglement. Untiring, uncomplaining, thoughtful of others, prodigal of himself, generous, modest, brave; with so much intellect and so much devotion to what he considered his duty, he deserved to be a patriot and a champion of the right, rather than an instrument of despotism.

And thus he paused for a moment—with much work already accomplished, but his hardest life-task before him; still in the noon of manhood, a fine martial figure, standing, spear in hand, full in the sunlight, though all the scene around him was wrapped in gloom—a noble, commanding shape, entitled to the admiration which the energetic display of great powers, however unscrupulous, must always command. A dark, meridional physiognomy, a quick; alert, imposing head; jet black, close-clipped hair; a bold eagle's face, with full, bright, restless eye; a man rarely reposing, always ready, never alarmed; living in the saddle, with harness on his back—such was the Prince of Parma; matured and mellowed, but still unharmed by time.

The cities of Flanders and Brabant he determined to reduce by gaining command of the Scheldt. The five principal ones Ghent, Dendermonde, Mechlin, Brussels Antwerp, lie narrow circle, at distances from each other varying from five miles to thirty, and are all strung together by the great Netherland river or its tributaries. His plan was immensely furthered by the success of Balthasar Gerard, an ally whom Alexander had despised and distrusted, even while he employed him. The assassination of Orange was better to Parma than forty thousand men. A crowd of allies instantly started up for him, in the shape of treason, faintheartedness, envy, jealousy, insubordination, within the walls of every beleaguered city. Alexander knew well how to deal with those auxiliaries. Letters, artfully concocted, full of conciliation and of promise, were circulated in every council-room, in almost every house.

The surrender of Ghent—brought about by the governor's eloquence, aided by the golden arguments which he knew so well how to advance—had by the middle of September (19th Sept. 1584), put him in possession of West Flanders, with the important exception of the coast. Dendermonde capitulated at a still earlier day; while the fall of Brussels, which held out till many persons had been starved to death, was deferred till the 10th March of the following year, and that of Mechlin till midsummer.

The details of the military or political operations, by which the reduction of most of these places were effected, possess but little interest. The siege of Antwerp, however, was one of the most striking events of the age; and although the change in military tactics and the progress of science may have rendered this leaguer of less technical importance than it possessed in the sixteenth century, yet the illustration that it affords of the splendid abilities of Parma, of the most cultivated mode of warfare in use at that period, and of the internal politics by which the country was then regulated, make it necessary to dwell upon the details of an episode which must ever possess enduring interest.

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It is agreeable to reflect, too, that the fame of the general is not polluted with the wholesale butchery, which has stained the reputation of other Spanish commanders so indelibly. There was no killing for the mere love of slaughter. With but few exceptions, there was no murder in cold blood; and the many lives that were laid down upon those watery dykes were sacrificed at least in bold, open combat; in a contest, the ruling spirits of which were patriotism, or at least honour.

It is instructive, too, to observe the diligence and accuracy with which the best lights of the age were brought to bear upon the great problem which Parma had undertaken to solve. All the science then at command was applied both by the Prince and by his burgher antagonists to the advancement of their ends. Hydrostatics, hydraulics, engineering, navigation, gunnery, pyrotechnics, mining, geometry, were summoned as broadly, vigorously, and intelligently to the destruction or preservation of a trembling city, as they have ever been, in more commercial days, to advance a financial or manufacturing purpose. Land converted into water, and water into land, castles built upon the breast of rapid streams, rivers turned from their beds and taught new courses; the distant ocean driven across ancient bulwarks, mines dug below the sea, and canals made to percolate obscene morasses—which the red hand of war, by the very act, converted into blooming gardens—a mighty stream bridged and mastered in the very teeth of winter, floating ice-bergs, ocean-tides, and an alert and desperate foe, ever ready with fleets and armies and batteries—such were the materials of which the great spectacle was composed; a spectacle which enchained the attention of Europe for seven months, and on the result of which, it was thought, depended the fate of all the Netherlands, and perhaps of all Christendom.

Antwerp, then the commercial centre of the Netherlands and of Europe, stands upon the Scheldt. The river, flowing straight, broad, and full along the verge of the city, subtends the arc into which the place arranges itself as it falls back from the shore. Two thousand ships of the largest capacity then known might easily find room in its ample harbours. The stream, nearly half a mile in width, and sixty feet in depth, with a tidal rise and fall of eleven feet, moves, for a few miles, in a broad and steady current between the provinces of Brabant and Flanders. Then, dividing itself into many ample estuaries, and gathering up the level isles of Zeeland into its bosom, it seems to sweep out with them into the northern ocean. Here, at the junction of the river and the sea, lay the perpetual hope of Antwerp, for in all these creeks and currents swarmed the fleets of the Zeelanders, that hardy and amphibious race, with which few soldiers or mariners could successfully contend, on land or water.

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Even from the beginning of the year 1584 Parma had been from time to time threatening Antwerp. The victim instinctively felt that its enemy was poisoning and hovering over head, although he still delayed to strike. Early in the summer Sainte Aldegonde, Recorder Martini, and other official personages, were at Delft, upon the occasion of the christening ceremonies of Frederic Henry, youngest child of Orange. The Prince, at that moment, was aware of the plans of Parma, and held a long conversation with his friends upon the measures which he desired to see immediately undertaken. Unmindful of his usual hospitality, he insisted that these gentlemen should immediately leave for Antwerp. Alexander Farnese, he assured them, had taken the firm determination to possess himself of that place, without further delay. He had privately signified his purpose of laying the axe at once to the root of the tree, believing that with the fall of the commercial capital the infant confederacy of the United States would fall likewise. In order to accomplish this object, he would forthwith attempt to make himself master of the banks of the Scheldt, and would even throw a bridge across the stream, if his plans were not instantly circumvented.

William of Orange then briefly indicated his plan; adding that he had no fears for the result; and assuring his friends, who expressed much anxiety on the subject, that if Parma really did attempt the siege of Antwerp it should be his ruin. The plan was perfectly simple. The city stood upon a river. It was practicable, although extremely hazardous, for the enemy to bridge that river, and by so doing ultimately to reduce the place. But the ocean could not be bridged; and it was quite possible to convert Antwerp, for a season, into an ocean-port. Standing alone upon an island, with the sea flowing around it, and with full and free marine communication with Zeeland and Holland, it might safely bid defiance to the land-forces, even of so great a commander as Parma. To the furtherance of this great measure of defence, it was necessary to destroy certain bulwarks, the chief of (10th June, 1584) which was called the Blaw-garen Dyke; and Sainte Aldegonde was therefore requested to return to the city, in order to cause this task to be executed without delay.

Nothing could be more judicious than this advice. The low lands along the Scheldt were protected against marine encroachments, and the river itself was confined to its bed, by a magnificent system of dykes, which extended along its edge towards the ocean, in parallel lines. Other barriers of a similar nature ran in oblique directions, through the wide open pasture lands, which they maintained in green fertility, against the ever-threatening sea. The Blaw-garen, to which the prince mainly alluded, was connected with the great dyke upon the right bank of the Scheldt. Between this and the city, another bulwark called the Kowenstyn Dyke, crossed the country at right angles to the river, and joined the other two at a point, not very far from Lillo, where the States had a strong fortress.

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The country in this neighbourhood was low, spongy, full of creeks, small meres, and the old bed of the Scheldt. Orange, therefore, made it very clear, that by piercing the great dyke just described, such a vast body of water would be made to pour over the land as to submerge the Kowenstyn also, the only other obstacle in the passage of fleets from Zeeland to Antwerp. The city would then be connected with the sea and its islands, by so vast an expanse of navigable water, that any attempt on Parma's part to cut off supplies and succour would be hopeless. Antwerp would laugh the idea of famine to scorn; and although this immunity would be purchased by the sacrifice of a large amount of agricultural territory the price so paid was but a slender one, when the existence of the capital, and with it perhaps of the whole confederacy was at stake.

Sainte Aldegonde and Martini suggested, that, as there would be some opposition to the measure proposed, it might be as well to make a similar attempt on the Flemish side, in preference, by breaking through the dykes in the neighbourhood of Saftingen. Orange replied, by demonstrating that the land in the region which he had indicated was of a character to ensure success, while in the other direction there were certain very unfavourable circumstances which rendered the issue doubtful. The result was destined to prove the sagacity of the Prince, for it will be shown in the sequel, that the Saftingen plan, afterwards really carried out, was rather advantageous than detrimental to the enemy's projects.

Sainte Aldegonde, accordingly, yielded to the arguments and entreaties of his friend, and repaired without delay to Antwerp.

The advice of William the Silent—as will soon be related—was not acted upon; and, within a few weeks after it had been given, he was in his grave. Nowhere was his loss more severely felt than in Antwerp. It seemed, said a contemporary, that with his death had died all authority. The Prince was the only head which the many-membered body of that very democratic city ever spontaneously obeyed. Antwerp was a small republic—in time of peace intelligently and successfully administered—which in the season of a great foreign war, amid plagues, tumults, famine, and internal rebellion, required the firm hand and the clear brain of a single chief. That brain and hand had been possessed by Orange alone.

Before his death he had desired that Sainte Aldegonde should accept the office of burgomaster of the city. Nominally, the position was not so elevated as were many of the posts which that distinguished patriot had filled. In reality, it was as responsible and arduous a place as could be offered to any man's acceptance throughout the country. Sainte Aldegonde consented, not without some reluctance. He felt that there was odium to be incurred; he knew that much would be expected of him, and that his means would be limited. His powers would be liable to a constant and various restraint. His measures were sure to be the subject of perpetual cavil. If the city were besieged, there were nearly one hundred thousand mouths to feed, and nearly one hundred thousand tongues to dispute about furnishing the food.

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For the government of Antwerp had been degenerating from a well-organised municipal republicanism into anarchy. The clashing of the various bodies exercising power had become incessant and intolerable. The burgomaster was charged with the chief executive authority, both for peace and war. Nevertheless he had but a single vote in the board of magistrates, where a majority decided. Moreover, he could not always attend the sessions, because he was also member of the council of Brabant. Important measures might therefore be decided by the magistracy, not only against his judgment, but without his knowledge. Then there was a variety of boards or colleges, all arrogating concurrent—which in truth was conflicting-authority. There was the board of militia-colonels, which claimed great powers. Here, too, the burgomaster was nominally the chief, but he might be voted down by a majority, and of course was often absent. Then there were sixteen captains who came into the colonels' sessions whenever they liked, and had their word to say upon all subjects broached. If they were refused a hearing, they were backed by eighty other captains, who were ready at any moment to carry every disputed point before the "broadcouncil."

There were a college of ward-masters, a college of select men, a college of deacons, a college of ammunition, of fortification, of ship-building, all claiming equal authority, and all wrangling among themselves; and there was a college of "peace-makers," who wrangled more than all the rest together.

Once a week there was a session of the board or general council. Dire was the hissing and confusion, as the hydra heads of the multitudinous government were laid together. Heads of colleges, presidents of chambers, militia-chieftains; magistrates, ward-masters, deans of fishmongers, of tailors, gardeners, butchers, all met together pell-mell; and there was no predominant authority. This was not a convenient working machinery for a city threatened with a siege by the first captain of the age. Moreover there was a deficiency of regular troops: The burgher-militia were well trained and courageous, but not distinguished for their docility. There was also a regiment of English under Colonel Morgan, a soldier of great experience, and much respected; but, as Stephen Le Sieur said, "this force, unless seconded with more, was but a breakfast for the enemy." Unfortunately, too, the insubordination, which was so ripe in the city, seemed to affect these auxiliaries. A mutiny broke out among the English troops. Many deserted to Parma, some escaped to England, and it was not until Morgan had beheaded Captain Lee and Captain Powell, that discipline could be restored.

And into this scene of wild and deafening confusion came Philip de Marnix, Lord of Sainte Aldegonde.

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There were few more brilliant characters than he in all Christendom. He was a man, of a most rare and versatile genius. Educated in Geneva at the very feet of Calvin, he had drunk, like mother's milk, the strong and bitter waters of the stern reformer's, creed; but he had in after life attempted, although hardly with success, to lift himself to the height of a general religious toleration. He had also been trained in the severe and thorough literary culture which characterised that rigid school. He was a scholar, ripe and rare; no holiday trifler in the gardens of learning. He spoke and wrote Latin like his native tongue. He could compose poignant Greek epigrams. He was so familiar with Hebrew, that he had rendered the Psalms of David out of the original into flowing Flemish verse, for the use of the reformed churches. That he possessed the modern tongues of civilized Europe, Spanish, Italian, French, and German, was a matter of course. He was a profound jurisconsult, capable of holding debate against all competitors upon any point of theory or practice of law, civil, municipal, international. He was a learned theologian, and had often proved himself a match for the doctors, bishops, or rabbins of Europe, in highest argument of dogma, creed, or tradition. He was a practised diplomatist, constantly employed in delicate and difficult negotiations by William the Silent, who ever admired his genius, cherished his friendship, and relied upon his character. He was an eloquent orator, whose memorable harangue, beyond all his other efforts, at the diet of Worms, had made the German princes hang their heads with shame, when, taking a broad and philosophical view of the Netherland matter, he had shown that it was the great question of Europe; that Nether Germany was all Germany; that Protestantism could not be unravelled into shreds; that there was but one cause in Christendom—that of absolutism against national liberty, Papacy against the reform; and that the seventeen Provinces were to be assisted in building themselves into an eternal barrier against Spain, or that the "burning mark of shame would be branded upon the forehead of Germany;" that the war, in short, was to be met by her on the threshold; or else that it would come to seek her at home—a prophecy which the horrible Thirty Years' War was in after time most signally to verify.

He was a poet of vigour and originality, for he had accomplished what has been achieved by few; he had composed a national hymn, whose strophes, as soon as heard, struck a chord in every Netherland heart, and for three centuries long have rung like a clarion wherever the Netherland tongue is spoken. "Wilhelmus van Nassouwe," regarded simply as a literary composition, has many of the qualities which an ode demands; an electrical touch upon the sentiments, a throb of patriotism, sympathetic tenderness, a dash of indignation, with rhythmical harmony and graceful expression; and thus it has rung from millions of lips, from generation to generation.

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He was a soldier, courageous, untiring, prompt in action, useful in council, and had distinguished himself in many a hard-fought field. Taken prisoner in the sanguinary skirmish at Maaslandssluis, he had been confined a year, and, for more than three months, had never laid his head, as he declared, upon the pillow without commending his soul as for the last time to his Maker, expecting daily the order for his immediate execution, and escaping his doom only because William the Silent proclaimed that the proudest head among the Spanish prisoners should fall to avenge his death; so that he was ultimately exchanged against the veteran Mondragon.

From the incipient stages of the revolt he had been foremost among the patriots. He was supposed to be the author of the famous “Compromise of the Nobles,” that earliest and most conspicuous of the state-papers of the republic, and of many other important political documents; and he had contributed to general literature many works of European celebrity, of which the ‘Roman Bee-Hive’ was the most universally known.

Scholar, theologian, diplomatist, swordsman, orator, poet, pamphleteer, he had genius for all things, and was eminent in all. He was even famous for his dancing, and had composed an intelligent and philosophical treatise upon the value of that amusement, as an agent of civilisation, and as a counteractor of the grosser pleasures of the table to which Upper and Nether Germans were too much addicted.

Of ancient Savoyard extraction, and something of a southern nature, he had been born in Brussels, and was national to the heart’s core.

A man of interesting, sympathetic presence; of a physiognomy where many of the attaching and attractive qualities of his nature revealed themselves; with crisp curling hair, surmounting a tall, expansive forehead—full of benevolence, idealism, and quick perceptions; broad, brown, melancholy eyes, overflowing with tenderness; a lean and haggard cheek, a rugged Flemish nose; a thin flexible mouth; a slender moustache, and a peaked and meagre beard; so appeared Sainte Aldegonde in the forty-seventh year of his age, when he came to command in Antwerp.

Yet after all—many-sided, accomplished, courageous, energetic, as he was—it may be doubted whether he was the man for the hour or the post. He was too impressionable; he had too much of the temperament of genius. Without being fickle, he had, besides his versatility of intellect, a character which had much facility in turning; not, indeed, in the breeze of self-interest, but because he seemed placed in so high and clear an atmosphere of thought that he was often acted upon and swayed by subtle and invisible influences. At any rate his conduct was sometimes inexplicable. He had been strangely fascinated by the ignoble Duke of Anjou, and, in the sequel, it will be found that he was destined to experience other magnetic or magical impulses, which were once thought suspicious, and have remained mysterious even to the present day.

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He was imaginative. He was capable of broad and boundless hopes. He was sometimes prone to deep despair. His nature was exquisitely tempered; too fine and polished a blade to be wielded among those hydra-heads by which he was, now surrounded; and for which the stunning sledgehammer of arbitrary force was sometimes necessary.

He was perhaps deficient in that gift, which no training and no culture can bestow, and which comes from above alone by birth-right divine—that which men willingly call master, authority; the effluence which came so naturally from the tranquil eyes of William the Silent.

Nevertheless, Sainte Aldegonde was prepared to do his best, and all his best was to be tasked to the utmost. His position was rendered still more difficult by the unruly nature of some of his coordinates.

“From the first day to the last,” said one who lived in Antwerp during the siege, “the mistakes committed in the city were incredible.” It had long been obvious that a siege was contemplated by Parma. A liberal sum of money had been voted by the States-General, of which Holland and Zeeland contributed a very large proportion (two hundred thousand florins); the city itself voted another large subsidy, and an order was issued to purchase at once and import into the city at least a year’s supply of every kind of provisions of life and munitions of war.

William de Blois, Lord of Treslong, Admiral of Holland and Zeeland, was requested to carry out this order, and superintend the victualling of Antwerp. But Treslong at once became troublesome. He was one of the old “beggars of the sea,” a leader in the wild band who had taken possession of the Brill, in the teeth of Alva, and so laid the foundation of the republic. An impetuous noble, of wealthy family, high connections, and refractory temper—a daring sailor, ever ready for any rash adventure, but possessed of a very moderate share of prudence or administrative ability, he fell into loose and lawless courses on the death of Orange, whose firm hand was needed to control him. The French negotiation had excited his profound disgust, and knowing Sainte Aldegonde to be heart and soul in favour of that alliance, he was in no haste whatever to carry out his orders with regard to Antwerp. He had also an insignificant quarrel with President Meetkerk. The Prince of Parma—ever on the watch for such opportunities—was soon informed of the Admiral’s discontent, and had long been acquainted with his turbulent character. Alexander at once began to inflame his jealousy and soothe his vanity by letters and messengers, urging upon him the propriety of reconciling himself with the King, and promising him large rewards and magnificent employments in the royal service. Even the splendid insignia of the Golden Fleece were dangled before his eyes. It is certain that the bold Hollander was not seduced by these visions, but there is no doubt that he listened to the voice of the tempter.

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He unquestionably neglected his duty. Week after week he remained, at Ostend, sneering at the French and quaffing huge draughts in honour of Queen Elizabeth. At last, after much time had elapsed, he agreed to victual Antwerp if he could be furnished with thirty krom-stevens,—a peculiar kind of vessel, not to be found in Zeeland. The krom-stevens were sent to him from Holland. Then, hearing that his negligence had been censured by the States-General, he became more obstinate than ever, and went up and down proclaiming that if people made themselves disagreeable to him he would do that which should make all the women and children in the Netherlands shriek and tremble. What this nameless horror was to be he never divulged, but meantime he went down to Middelburg, and swore that not a boat-load of corn should go up to Antwerp until two members of the magistracy, whom he considered unpleasant, had been dismissed from their office. Wearied with all this bluster, and imbued with grave suspicion as to his motives, the States at last rose upon their High Admiral and threw him into prison. He was accused of many high crimes and misdemeanours, and, it was thought, would be tried for his life. He was suspected and even openly accused of having been tampered with by Spain, but there was at any rate a deficiency of proof.

“Treslong is apprehended,” wrote Davison to Burghley, “and, is charged to have been the cause that the fleet passed not up to Antwerp. He is suspected to have otherwise forgotten himself, but whether justly or not will appear by his trial. Meantime he is kept in the common prison of Middelburg, a treatment which it is thought they would not offer him if they had not somewhat of importance against him.”

He was subsequently released at the intercession of Queen Elizabeth, and passed some time in England. He was afterwards put upon trial, but no accuser appearing to sustain the charges against him, he was eventually released. He never received a command in the navy again, but the very rich sinecures of Grand Falconer and Chief Forester of Holland were bestowed upon him, and he appears to have ended his days in peace and plenty.

He was succeeded in the post of Admiral of Holland and Zeeland by Justinus de Nassau, natural son of William the Silent, a young man of much promise but of little experience.

General Count Hohenlo, too, lieutenant for young Maurice, and virtual commander-in-chief of the States' forces, was apt to give much trouble. A German noble, of ancient descent and princely rank; brave to temerity, making a jest of danger; and riding into a foray as if to a merry-making; often furiously intoxicated, and always turbulent and uncertain; a handsome, dissipated cavalier, with long curls floating over his shoulders, an imposing aristocratic face, and a graceful, athletic figure, he needed some cool brain and steady hand to guide him—valuable as he was to fulfil any daring project but was hardly willing to accept the authority of a burgomaster. While the young Maurice yet

needed tutelage, while “the sapling was growing into the tree,” Hohenlo was a dangerous chieftain and a most disorderly lieutenant.

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With such municipal machinery and such coadjutors had Sainte Aldegonde to deal, while, meantime, the delusive French negotiation was dragging its slow length along, and while Parma was noiselessly and patiently proceeding with his preparations.

The burgomaster—for Sainte Aldegonde, in whom vulgar ambition was not a foible, had refused the dignity and title of Margrave of Antwerp, which had been tendered him—had neglected no effort towards carrying into effect the advice of Orange, given almost with his latest breath. The manner in which that advice was received furnished a striking illustration of the defective machinery which has been portrayed.

Upon his return from Delft, Sainte Aldegonde had summoned a meeting of the magistracy of Antwerp. He laid before the board the information communicated by Orange as to Parma's intentions. He also explained the scheme proposed for their frustration, and urged the measures indicated with so much earnestness that his fellow-magistrates were convinced. The order was passed for piercing the Blauw-garen Dyke, and Sainte Aldegonde, with some engineers, was requested to view the locality, and to take order for the immediate fulfilment of the plan.

Unfortunately there were many other boards in session besides that of the Schepens, many other motives at work besides those of patriotism. The guild of butchers held a meeting, so soon as the plan suggested was known, and resolved with all their strength to oppose its execution.

The butchers were indeed furious. Twelve thousand oxen grazed annually upon the pastures which were about to be submerged, and it was represented as unreasonable that all this good flesh and blood should be sacrificed. At a meeting of the magistrates on the following day, sixteen butchers, delegates from their guild, made their appearance, hoarse with indignation. They represented the vast damage which would be inflicted upon the estates of many private individuals by the proposed inundation, by this sudden conversion of teeming meadows, fertile farms, thriving homesteads, prolific orchards, into sandy desolation. Above all they depicted, in glowing colours and with natural pathos, the vast destruction of beef which was imminent, and they urged—with some show of reason—that if Parma were really about to reduce Antwerp by famine, his scheme certainly would not be obstructed by the premature annihilation of these wholesome supplies.

That the Scheldt could be, closed in any manner was, however, they said, a preposterous conception. That it could be bridged was the dream of a lunatic. Even if it were possible to construct a bridge, and probable that the Zeelanders and Antwerpers would look on with folded arms while the work proceeded, the fabric, when completed, would be at the mercy of the ice-floods of the winter and the enormous power of the ocean-tides. The Prince of Orange himself, on a former occasion, when Antwerp was Spanish, had attempted to close the river with rafts, sunken piles, and other obstructions, but the whole had been swept away, like a dam of bulrushes, by the first

descent of the ice-blocks of winter. It was witless to believe that Parma contemplated any such measure, and utterly monstrous to believe in its success.

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Thus far the butchers. Soon afterwards came sixteen colonels of militia, as representatives of their branch of the multiform government. These personages, attended by many officers of inferior degree, sustained the position of the butchers with many voluble and vehement arguments. Not the least convincing of their conclusions was the assurance that it would be idle for the authorities to attempt the destruction of the dyke, seeing that the municipal soldiery itself would prevent the measure by main force, at all hazards, and without regard to their own or others' lives.

The violence of this opposition, and the fear of a serious internecine conflict at so critical a juncture, proved fatal to the project. Much precious time was lost, and when at last the inhabitants of the city awoke from their delusion, it was to find that repentance, as usual, had come many hours too late.

For Parma had been acting while his antagonists had been wrangling. He was hampered in his means, but he was assisted by what now seems the incredible supineness of the Netherlands. Even Sainte Aldegonde did not believe in the possibility of erecting the bridge; not a man in Antwerp seemed to believe it. "The preparations," said one who lived in the city, "went on before our very noses, and every one was ridiculing the Spanish commander's folly."

A very great error was, moreover, committed in abandoning Herenthals to the enemy. The city of Antwerp governed Brabant, and it would have been far better for the authorities of the commercial capital to succour this small but important city, and, by so doing, to protract for a long time their own defence. Mondragon saw and rejoiced over the mistake. "Now 'tis easy to see that the Prince of Orange is dead," said the veteran, as he took possession, in the Icing's name, of the forsaken Herenthals.

Early in the summer, Parma's operations had been, of necessity, desultory. He had sprinkled forts up and down the Scheldt, and had gradually been gaining control of the navigation upon that river. Thus Ghent and Dendermonde, Vilvoorde, Brussels, and Antwerp, had each been isolated, and all prevented from rendering mutual assistance. Below Antwerp, however, was to be the scene of the great struggle. Here, within nine miles of the city, were two forts belonging to the States, on opposite sides of the stream, Lille, and Liefkenshoek. It was important for the Spanish commander to gain possession of both; before commencing his contemplated bridge.

Unfortunately for the States, the fortifications of Liefkenshoek, on the Flemish side of the river, had not been entirely completed. Eight hundred men lay within it, under Colonel John Pettin of Arras, an old patriotic officer of much experience. Parma, after reconnoitring the place in person, despatched the famous Viscount of Ghent—now called Marquis of Roubaix and Richebourg—to carry it by assault. The Marquis sent one hundred men from his Walloon legion, under two officers, in whom he had confidence, to attempt a surprise, with orders, if not successful, to return without delay.

They were successful. The one hundred gained entrance into the fort at a point where the defences had not been put into sufficient repair.

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They were immediately followed by Richebourg, at the head of his regiment. The day was a fatal one. It was the 10th July, 1584 and William of Orange was falling at Delft by the hand of Balthazar Gerard. Liefkenshoek was carried at a blow. Of the eight hundred patriots in the place, scarcely a man escaped. Four hundred were put to the sword, the others were hunted into the river, when nearly all were drowned. Of the royalists a single man was killed, and two or three more were wounded. "Our Lord was pleased," wrote Parma piously to Philip, that we "should cut the throats of four hundred of them in a single instant, and that a great many more should be killed upon the dykes; so that I believe very few to have escaped with life. We lost one man, besides two or three wounded." A few were taken prisoners, and among them was the commander John Pettin. He was at once brought before Richebourg, who was standing in the presence of the Prince of Parma. The Marquis drew his sword, walked calmly up to the captured Colonel, and ran him through the body. Pettin fell dead upon the spot. The Prince was displeased. "Too much choler, Marquis, too much choler,"—said he reprovingly. "Troppa colera, Signor Marchese, a questa." But Richebourg knew better. He had, while still Viscount of Ghent, carried on a year previously a parallel intrigue with the royalists and the patriots. The Prince of Parma had bid highest for his services, and had, accordingly, found him a most effectual instrument in completing the reduction of the Walloon Provinces. The Prince was not aware, however, that his brave but venal ally had, at the very same moment, been secretly treating with William of Orange; and as it so happened that Colonel Pettin had been the agent in the unsuccessful negotiation, it was possible that his duplicity would now be exposed. The Marquis had, therefore, been prompt to place his old confederate in the condition wherein men tell no tales, and if contemporary chronicles did not bely him, it was not the first time that he had been guilty of such cold-blooded murder. The choler had not been superfluous.

The fortress of Lille was garrisoned by the Antwerp volunteers, called the "Young Bachelors." Teligny, the brave son of the illustrious "Iron-armed" La None, commanded in chief: and he had, besides the militia, a company of French under Captain Gascoigne, and four hundred Scotchmen under Colonel Morgan—perhaps two thousand men in all.

Mondragon, hero of the famous submarine expeditions of Philipsland and Zierickzee, was ordered by Parma to take the place at every hazard. With five thousand men—a large proportion of the Spanish effective force at that moment—the veteran placed himself before the fort, taking possession, of the beautiful country-house and farm of Lille, where he planted his batteries, and commenced a regular cannonade. The place was stronger than Liefkenshoek, however, and Teligny thoroughly comprehended the importance

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of maintaining it for the States. Mondragon dug mines, and Teligny countermined. The Spanish daily cannonade was cheerfully responded to by the besieged, and by the time Mondragon had shot away fifty thousand pounds of powder, he found that he had made no impression upon the fortress, while the number of his troops had been diminishing with great rapidity. Mondragon was not so impetuous as he had been on many former occasions. He never ventured an assault. At last Teligny made a sortie at the head of a considerable force. A warm action succeeded, at the conclusion of which, without a decided advantage on either side, the sluice-gate in the fortress was opened, and the torrent of the Scheldt, swollen by a high tide, was suddenly poured upon the Spaniards. Assailed at once by the fire from the Lillo batteries, and by the waters of the river, they were forced to a rapid retreat. This they effected with great loss, but with signal courage; struggling breast high in the waves, and bearing off their field-pieces in their arms in the very face of the enemy.

Three weeks long Mondragon had been before Fort Lille, and two thousand of his soldiers had been slain in the trenches. The attempt was now abandoned. Parma directed permanent batteries to be established at Lillo-house, at Oordam, and at other places along the river, and proceeded quietly with his carefully-matured plan for closing the river.

His own camp was in the neighbourhood of the villages of Beveren, Kalloo, and Borght. Of the ten thousand foot and seventeen hundred horse, which composed at the moment his whole army, about one-half lay with him, while the remainder were with Count Peter Ernest Mansfield, in the neighbourhood of Stabroek. Thus the Prince occupied a position on the left bank of the Scheldt, nearly opposite Antwerp, while Mansfield was stationed upon the right bank, and ten miles farther down the river. From a point in the neighbourhood of Kalloo, Alexander intended to throw a fortified bridge to the opposite shore. When completed, all traffic up the river from Zeeland would be cut off; and as the country on the land-side; abut Antwerp, had been now reduced, the city would be effectually isolated. If the Prince could hold his bridge until famine should break the resistance of the burghers, Antwerp would fall into his hands.

His head-quarters were at Kalloo, and this obscure spot soon underwent a strange transformation. A drowsy placid little village—with a modest parish spire peeping above a clump of poplars, and with half a dozen cottages, with storks nests on their roofs, sprinkled here and there among pastures and orchards—suddenly saw itself changed as it were into a thriving bustling town; for, saving the white tents which dotted the green turf in every direction, the aspect of the scene was, for a time, almost pacific. It was as if, some great manufacturing enterprise had been set on foot, and the world had suddenly awoken to the hidden capabilities of the situation.

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A great dockyard and arsenal suddenly revealed themselves—rising like an exhalation—where ship-builders, armourers, blacksmiths, joiners, carpenters, caulkers, gravers, were hard at work all day long. The din and hum of what seemed a peaceful industry were unceasing. From Kalloo, Parma dug a canal twelve miles long to a place called Steeken, hundreds of pioneers being kept constantly at work with pick and spade till it was completed. Through this artificial channel—so soon as Ghent and Dendermonde had fallen—came floats of timber, fleets of boats laden with provisions of life and munitions of death, building-materials, and every other requisite for the great undertaking, all to be disembarked at Kalloo. The object was a temporary and destructive one, but it remains a monument of the great general's energy and a useful public improvement. The amelioration of the fenny and barren soil, called the Waesland, is dated from that epoch; and the spot in Europe which is the most prolific, and which nourishes the largest proportion of inhabitants to the square mile, is precisely the long dreary swamp which the Prince thus drained for military purposes, and converted into a garden. Drusus and Corbulo, in the days of the Roman Empire, had done the same good service for their barbarian foes.

At Kalloo itself, all the shipwrights, cutlers, masons, brass-founders, rope-makers, anchor-forgers, sailors, boatmen, of Flanders and Brabant, with a herd of bakers, brewers, and butchers, were congregated by express order of Parma. In the little church itself the main workshop was established, and all day long, week after week, month after month, the sound of saw and hammer, adze and plane, the rattle of machinery, the cry of sentinels, the cheers of mariners, resounded, where but lately had been heard nothing save the drowsy homily and the devout hymn of rustic worship.

Nevertheless the summer and autumn wore on, and still the bridge was hardly commenced. The navigation of the river—although impeded and rendered dangerous by the forts which Parma held along the banks—was still open; and, so long as the price of corn in Antwerp remained three or four times as high as the sum for which it could be purchased in Holland and Zeeland, there were plenty of daredevil skippers ready to bring cargoes. Fleets of fly-boats, convoyed by armed vessels, were perpetually running the gauntlet. Sharp actions on shore between the forts of the patriots and those of Parma, which were all intermingled promiscuously along the banks, and amphibious and most bloody encounters on ship-board, dyke, and in the stream itself, between the wild Zeelanders and the fierce pikemen of Italy and Spain, were of repeated occurrence. Many a lagging craft fell into the enemy's hands, when, as a matter of course, the men, women, and children, on board, were horribly mutilated by the Spaniards, and were then sent drifting in their boat with the tide—their arms, legs, and ears lopped off up to the city, in order that—the dangerous nature of this provision-trade might be fully illustrated.

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Yet that traffic still went on. It would have continued until Antwerp had been victualled for more than a year, had not the city authorities, in the plentitude of their wisdom, thought proper to issue orders for its regulation. On the 25th October (1584) a census was taken, when the number of persons inside the walls was found to be ninety thousand. For this population it was estimated that 300,000 veertell, or about 900,000 bushels of corn, would be required annually. The grain was coming in very fast, notwithstanding the perilous nature of the trade; for wheat could be bought in Holland for fifty florins the last, or about fifteen pence sterling the bushel, while it was worth five or six florins the veertel, or about four shillings the bushel, in Antwerp.

The magistrates now committed a folly more stupendous than it seemed possible for human creatures, under such circumstances, to compass. They established a maximum upon corn. The skippers who had run their cargoes through the gauntlet, all the way from Flushing to Antwerp, found on their arrival, that, instead of being rewarded, according to the natural laws of demand and supply, they were required to exchange their wheat, rye, butter, and beef, against the exact sum which the Board of Schepens thought proper to consider a reasonable remuneration. Moreover, in order to prevent the accumulation of provisions in private magazines, it was enacted, that all consumers of grain should be compelled to make their purchases directly from the ships. These two measures were almost as fatal as the preservation of the Blaw-garen Dyke, in the interest of the butchers. Winter and famine were staring the city in the face, and the maximum now stood sentinel against the gate, to prevent the admission of food. The traffic ceased without a struggle. Parma himself could not have better arranged the blockade.

Meantime a vast and almost general inundation had taken place. The aspect of the country for many miles around was strange and desolate. The sluices had been opened in the neighbourhood of Saftingen, on, the Flemish side, so that all the way from Hulst the waters were out, and flowed nearly to the gates of Antwerp. A wide and shallow sea rolled over the fertile plains, while church-steeple, the tops of lofty trees, and here and there the turrets of a castle, scarcely lifted themselves above the black waters; the peasants' houses, the granges, whole rural villages, having entirely disappeared. The high grounds of Doel, of Kalloo, and Beveren, where Alexander was established, remained out of reach of the flood. Far below, on the opposite side of the river, other sluices had been opened, and the sea had burst over the wide, level plain. The villages of Wilmerdonk, Ordenen, Ekeren, were changed to islands in the ocean, while all the other hamlets, for miles around, were utterly submerged.

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Still, however, the Blaw-garen Dyke and its companion the Kowenstyn remained obstinately above the waters, forming a present and more fatal obstruction to the communication between Antwerp and Zeeland than would be furnished even by the threatened and secretly-advancing bridge across the Scheldt. Had Orange's prudent advice been taken, the city had been safe. Over the prostrate dykes, whose destruction he had so warmly urged, the ocean would have rolled quite to the gates of Antwerp, and it would have been as easy to bridge the North Sea as to control the free navigation of the patriots over so wide a surface.

When it was too late, the butchers, and colonels, and captains, became penitent enough. An order was passed, by acclamation, in November, to do what Orange had recommended in June. It was decreed that the Blaw-garen and the Kowenstyn should be pierced. Alas, the hour had long gone by. Alexander of Parma was not the man to undertake the construction of a bridge across the river, at a vast expense, and at the same time to permit the destruction of the already existing barrier. There had been a time for such a deed. The Seigneur de Kowenstyn, who had a castle and manor on and near the dyke which bore his name, had repeatedly urged upon the Antwerp magistracy the propriety of piercing this bulwark, even after their refusal to destroy the outer barrier. Sainte Aldegonde, who vehemently urged the measure, protested that his hair had stood on end, when he found, after repeated entreaty, that the project was rejected. The Seigneur de Kowenstyn, disgusted and indignant, forswore his patriotism, and went over to Parma. The dyke fell into the hands of the enemy. And now from Stabroek, where old Mansfeid lay with his army, all the way across the flooded country, ran the great bulwark, strengthened with new palisade-work and block-houses, bristling with Spanish cannon, pike, and arquebus, even to the bank of the Scheldt, in the immediate vicinity of Fort Lille. At the angle of its junction with the main dyke of the river's bank, a strong fortress called Holy Cross (Santa Cruz) had been constructed. That fortress and the whole line of the Kowenstyn were held in the iron grip of Mondragon. To wrench it from him would be no child's play. Five new strong redoubts upon the dyke, and five or six thousand Spaniards established there, made the enterprise more formidable than it would have been in June. It had been better to sacrifice the twelve thousand oxen. Twelve thousand Hollanders might now be slaughtered, and still the dyke remain above the waves.

Here was the key to the fate of Antwerp.

On the other hand, the opening of the Saftingen Sluice had done Parma's work for him. Even there, too, Orange had been prophetic. Kalloo was high and dry, but Alexander had experienced some difficulty in bringing a fleet of thirty vessels, laden with cannon and other valuable materials, from Ghent along the Scheldt, into his encampment, because it was necessary for them, before reaching their destination, to pass in front of Antwerp. The inundation, together with a rupture in the Dyke of Borght, furnished him with a watery road; over which his fleet completely avoided the city, and came in triumph to Kalloo.

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Sainte Aldegonde, much provoked by this masterly movement on the part of Parma, had followed the little squadron closely with some armed vessels from the city. A sharp action had succeeded, in which the burgomaster, not being properly sustained by the Zeeland ships on which he relied, had been defeated. Admiral Jacob Jacobzoon behaved with so little spirit on the occasion that he acquired with the Antwerp populace the name of “Run-away Jacob,” “Koppen gaet loppen;” and Sainte Aldegonde declared, that, but for his cowardice, the fleet of Parma would have fallen into their hands. The burgomaster himself narrowly escaped becoming a prisoner, and owed his safety only to the swiftness of his barge, which was called the “Flying Devil.”

The patriots, in order to counteract similar enterprises in future, now erected a sconce, which they called Fort Teligny; upon the ruptured dyke of Borgh, directly in front of the Borgh blockhouse, belonging to the Spaniards, and just opposite Fort Hoboken. Here, in this narrow passage, close under the walls of Antwerp, where friends and foes were brought closely, face to face, was the scene of many a sanguinary skirmish, from the commencement of the siege until its close.

Still the bridge was believed to be a mere fable, a chimaera. Parma, men said, had become a lunatic from pride. It was as easy to make the Netherlands submit to the yoke of the Inquisition as to put a bridle on the Scheldt. Its depth; breadth, the ice-floods of a northern winter, the neighbourhood of the Zeeland fleets, the activity of the Antwerp authorities, all were pledges that the attempt would be signally frustrated.

And they should have been pledges—more than enough. Unfortunately, however, there was dissension within, and no chieftain in the field, no sage in the council, of sufficient authority to sustain the whole burthen of the war, and to direct all the energies of the commonwealth. Orange was dead. His son, one day to become the most illustrious military commander in Europe, was a boy of seventeen, nominally captain-general, but in reality but a youthful apprentice to his art. Hohenlo was wild, wilful, and obstinate. Young William Lewis Nassau, already a soldier of marked abilities, was fully occupied in Friesland, where he was stadholder, and where he had quite enough to do in making head against the Spanish governor and general, the veteran Verdugo: Military operations against Zutphen distracted the attention of the States, which should have been fixed upon Antwerp.

Admiral Treslong, as we have seen, was refractory, the cause of great delinquency on the part of the fleets, and of infinite disaster to the commonwealth. More than all, the French negotiation was betraying the States into indolence and hesitation; and creating a schism between the leading politicians of the country. Several thousand French troops, under Monsieur d’Allaynes, were daily expected, but never arrived; and thus, while English and French partisans were plotting and counter-plotting, while a delusive diplomacy was usurping the place of lansquenettes and gun-boats—the only possible agents at that moment to preserve Antwerp—the bridge of Parma was slowly

advancing. Before the winter had closed in, the preparatory palisades had been finished.

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Between Kalloo and Ordam, upon the opposite side, a sandbar had been discovered in the river's bed, which diminished the depth of the stream, and rendered the pile-driving comparatively easy. The breadth of the Scheldt at this passage was twenty-four hundred feet; its depth, sixty feet. Upon the Flemish side, near Kalloo, a strong fort was erected, called Saint Mary, in honour of the blessed Virgin, to whom the whole siege of Antwerp had been dedicated from the beginning. On the opposite bank was a similar fort, named Philip, for the King. From each of these two points, thus fortified, a framework of heavy timber, supported upon huge piles, had been carried so far into the stream on either side that the distance between the ends had at last been reduced to thirteen hundred feet. The breadth of the roadway—formed of strong sleepers firmly bound together—was twelve feet, along which block-houses of great thickness were placed to defend the whole against assault.

Thus far the work had been comparatively easy. To bridge the remaining open portion of the river, however, where its current was deepest and strongest, and where the action of tide, tempest, and icebergs, would be most formidable, seemed a desperate undertaking; for as the enterprise advanced, this narrow open space became the scene of daily amphibious encounters between the soldiers and sailors of Parma and the forces of the States. Unfortunately for the patriots, it was only skirmishing. Had a strong, concerted attack, in large force, from Holland and Zeeland below and from the city above, been agreed upon, there was hardly a period, until very late in the winter, when it might not have had the best chances of success. With a vigorous commander against him, Parma, weak in men, and at his wits' end for money, might, in a few hours, have seen the labour of several months hopelessly annihilated. On the other hand, the Prince was ably seconded by his lieutenant, Marquis Richebourg, to whom had been delegated the immediate superintendence of the bridge-building in its minutest details. He was never idle. Audacious, indefatigable, ubiquitous, he at least atoned by energy and brilliant courage for his famous treason of the preceding year, while his striking and now rapidly approaching doom upon the very scene of his present labours, made him appear to have been building a magnificent though fleeting monument to his own memory.

Sainte Aldegonde, shut up in Antwerp, and hampered by dissension within and obstinate jealousy without the walls, did all in his power to frustrate the enemy's enterprise and animate the patriots. Through the whole of the autumn and early winter, he had urged the States of Holland and Zeeland to make use of the long winter nights, when moonless and stormy, to attempt the destruction of Parma's undertaking, but the fatal influences already indicated were more efficient against Antwerp than even the genius of Farnese; and

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nothing came of the burgomaster's entreaties save desultory skirmishing and unsuccessful enterprises. An especial misfortune happened in one of these midnight undertakings. Teligny ventured forth in a row-boat, with scarcely any companions, to notify the Zeelanders of a contemplated movement, in which their co-operation was desired. It was proposed that the Antwerp troops should make a fictitious demonstration upon Fort Ordam, while at the same moment the States' troops from Fort Lillo should make an assault upon the forts on Kowenstyn Dyke; and in this important enterprise the Zeeland vessels were requested to assist. But the brave Teligny nearly forfeited his life by his rashness, and his services were, for a long time, lost to the cause of liberty. It had been better to send a less valuable officer upon such hazardous yet subordinate service. The drip of his oars was heard in the darkness. He was pursued by a number of armed barges, attacked, wounded severely in the shoulder, and captured. He threw his letters overboard, but they were fished out of the water, carried to Parma, and deciphered, so that the projected attack upon the Kowenstyn was discovered, and, of necessity, deferred. As for Teligny, he was taken, as a most valuable prize, into the enemy's camp, and was soon afterwards thrust into prison at Tournay, where he remained six years— one year longer than the period which his illustrious father had been obliged to consume in the infamous dungeon at *Mons*. Few disasters could have been more keenly felt by the States than the loss of this brilliant and devoted French chieftain, who, young as he was, had already become very dear to the republic; and Sainte Aldegonde was severely blamed for sending so eminent a personage on that dangerous expedition, and for sending him, too, with an insufficient convoy.

Still Alexander felt uncertain as to the result. He was determined to secure Antwerp, but he yet thought it possible to secure it by negotiation. The enigmatical policy maintained by France perplexed him; for it did not seem possible that so much apparent solemnity and earnestness were destined to lead to an impotent and infamous conclusion. He was left, too, for a long time in ignorance of his own master's secret schemes, he was at liberty to guess, and to guess only, as to the projects of the league, he was without adequate means to carry out to a certain triumph his magnificent enterprise, and he was in constant alarm lest he should be suddenly assailed by an overwhelming French force. Had a man sat upon the throne of Henry III., at that moment, Parma's bridge-making and dyke-fortifying skilful as they were—would have been all in vain. Meantime, in uncertainty as to the great issue, but resolved to hold firmly to his purpose, he made repeated conciliatory offers to the States with one hand, while he steadily prosecuted his aggressive schemes with the other.

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Parma had become really gentle, almost affectionate, towards the Netherlanders. He had not the disposition of an Alva to smite and to blast, to exterminate the rebels and heretics with fire and sword, with the axe, the rack, and the gallows. Provided they would renounce the great object of the contest, he seemed really desirous that they should escape further chastisement; but to admit the worship of God according to the reformed creed, was with him an inconceivable idea. To do so was both unrighteous and impolitic. He had been brought up to believe that mankind could be saved from eternal perdition only by believing in the infallibility of the Bishop of Rome; that the only keys to eternal paradise were in the hands of St. Peter's representative. Moreover, he instinctively felt that within this religious liberty which the Netherlanders claimed was hidden the germ of civil liberty; and though no bigger than a grain of mustard-seed, it was necessary to destroy it at once; for of course the idea of civil liberty could not enter the brain of the brilliant general of Philip II.

On the 13th of November he addressed a letter to the magistracy and broad-council of Antwerp. He asserted that the instigators of the rebellion were not seeking to further the common weal, but their own private ends. Especially had this been the ruling motive with the prince of Orange and the Duke of Anjou, both of whom God had removed from the world, in order to manifest to the States their own weakness, and the omnipotence of Philip, whose prosperity the Lord was constantly increasing. It was now more than time for the authorities of the country to have regard for themselves, and for the miseries of the poor people. The affection which he had always felt for the Provinces from which he had himself sprung and the favours which he had received from them in his youth, had often moved him to propose measures, which, before God and his conscience, he believed adequate to the restoration of peace. But his letters had been concealed or falsely interpreted by the late Prince of Orange, who had sought nothing but to spread desolation over the land, and to shed the blood of the innocent. He now wrote once more, and for the last time, in all fervour and earnestness, to implore them to take compassion on their own wives and children and forlorn fatherland, to turn their eyes backward on the peace and prosperity which they had formerly enjoyed when obedient to his Majesty, and to cast a glance around them upon the miseries which were so universal since the rebellion. He exhorted them to close their ears to the insidious tongues of those who were leading them into delusion as to the benevolence and paternal sweetness of their natural lord and master, which were even now so boundless that he did not hesitate once more to offer them his entire forgiveness. If they chose to negotiate, they would find everything granted that with right and reason could be proposed. The Prince concluded by declaring that he made these advances not from any doubt as to the successful issue of the military operations in which he was engaged, but simply out of paternal anxiety for the happiness of the Provinces. Did they remain obstinate, their ultimate conditions would be rendered still more severe, and themselves, not he, would be responsible for the misery and the bloodshed to ensue.

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Ten days afterwards, the magistrates, thus addressed—after communication with the broad-council—answered Parma's. 23rd Nov., letter manfully, copiously, and with the customary but superfluous historical sketch. They begged leave to entertain a doubt as to the paternal sweetness of a king who had dealt so long in racks and gibbets. With Parma's own mother, as they told the Prince, the Netherlands had once made a treaty, by which the right to worship God according to their consciences had been secured; yet for maintaining that treaty they had been devoted to indiscriminate destruction, and their land made desolate with fire and sword. Men had been massacred by thousands, who had never been heard in their own defence, and who had never been accused of any crime, "save that they had assembled together in the name of God, to pray to Him through their only mediator and advocate Jesus Christ, according to His command."

The axis of the revolt was the religious question; and it was impossible to hope anything from a monarch who was himself a slave of the Inquisition, and who had less independence of action than that enjoyed by Jews and Turks, according to the express permission of the Pope. Therefore they informed Parma that they had done with Philip for ever, and that in consequence of the extraordinary wisdom, justice, and moderation, of the French King, they had offered him the sovereignty of their land, and had implored his protection.

They paid a tribute to the character of Farnese, who after gaining infinite glory in arms, had manifested so much gentleness and disposition to conciliate. They doubted not that he would, if he possessed the power, have guided the royal councils to better and more generous results, and protested that they would not have delayed to throw themselves into his arms, had they been assured that he was authorized to admit that which alone could form the basis of a successful negotiation— religious freedom. They would in such case have been willing to close with him, without talking about other conditions than such as his Highness in his discretion and sweetness might think reasonable.

Moreover, as they observed in conclusion, they were precluded, by their present relations with France, from entering into any other negotiation; nor could they listen to any such proposals without deserving to be stigmatized as the most lewd, blasphemous, and thankless mortals, that ever cumbered the earth.

Being under equal obligations both to the Union and to France, they announced that Parma's overtures would be laid before the French government and the assembly of the States-General.

A day was to come, perhaps, when it would hardly seem lewdness and blasphemy for the Netherlands to doubt the extraordinary justice and wisdom of the French King. Meantime, it cannot be denied that they were at least loyal to their own engagements, and long-suffering where they had trusted and given their hearts.

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Parma replied by another letter, dated December 3rd. He assured the citizens that Henry III. was far too discreet, and much too good a friend to Philip II., to countenance this rebellion. If he were to take up their quarrel, however, the King of Spain had a thousand means of foiling all his attempts. As to the religious question—which they affirmed to be the sole cause of the war—he was not inclined to waste words upon that subject; nevertheless, so far as he in his simplicity could understand the true nature of a Christian, he could not believe that it comported with the doctrines of Jesus, whom they called their only mediator, nor with the dictates of conscience, to take up arms against their lawful king, nor to burn, rob, plunder, pierce dykes, overwhelm their fatherland, and reduce all things to misery and chaos, in the name of religion.

Thus moralizing and dogmatizing, the Prince concluded his letter, and so the correspondence terminated. This last despatch was communicated at once both to the States-General and to the French government, and remained unanswered. Soon afterwards the Netherlands and England, France and Spain, were engaged in that vast game of delusion which has been described in the preceding chapters. Meantime both Antwerp and Parma remained among the deluded, and were left to fight out their battle on their own resources.

Having found it impossible to subdue Antwerp by his rhetoric, Alexander proceeded with his bridge. It is impossible not to admire the steadiness and ingenuity with which the Prince persisted in his plans, the courage with which he bore up against the parsimony and neglect of his sovereign, the compassionate tenderness which he manifested for his patient little army. So much intellectual energy commands enthusiasm, while the supineness on the other side sometimes excites indignation. There is even a danger of being entrapped into sympathy with tyranny, when the cause of tyranny is maintained by genius; and of being surprised into indifference for human liberty, when the sacred interests of liberty are endangered by self-interest, perverseness, and folly.

Even Sainte Aldegonde did not believe that the bridge could be completed. His fears were that the city would be ruined rather by the cessation of its commerce than by want of daily food. Already, after the capture of Liefkenshoek and the death of Orange, the panic among commercial people had been so intense that seventy or eighty merchants, representing the most wealthy mercantile firms in Antwerp, made their escape from the place, as if it had been smitten with pestilence, or were already in the hands of Parma. All such refugees were ordered to return on peril of forfeiting their property. Few came back, however, for they had found means of converting and transferring their funds to other more secure places, despite the threatened confiscation. It was insinuated that Holland and Zeeland were indifferent to the fate

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of Antwerp, because in the sequel the commercial cities of those Provinces succeeded to the vast traffic and the boundless wealth which had been forfeited by the Brabantine capital. The charge was an unjust one. At the very commencement of the siege the States of Holland voted two hundred thousand florins for its relief; and, moreover, these wealthy refugees were positively denied admittance into the territory of the United States, and were thus forced to settle in Germany or England. This cessation of traffic was that which principally excited the anxiety of Aldegonde. He could not bring himself to believe in the possibility of a blockade, by an army of eight or ten thousand men, of a great and wealthy city, where at least twenty thousand citizens were capable of bearing arms. Had he thoroughly understood the deprivations under which Alexander was labouring, perhaps he would have been even more confident as to the result.

“With regard to the affair of the river Scheldt,” wrote Parma to Philip, “I should like to send your Majesty a drawing of the whole scheme; for the work is too vast to be explained by letters. The more I examine it, the more astonished I am that it should have been conducted to this point; so many forts, dykes, canals, new inventions, machinery, and engines, have been necessarily required.”

He then proceeded to enlighten the King—as he never failed to do in all his letters—as to his own impoverished, almost helpless condition. Money, money, men! This was his constant cry. All would be in vain, he said, if he were thus neglected. “’Tis necessary,” said he, “for your Majesty fully to comprehend, that henceforth the enterprise is your own. I have done my work faithfully thus far; it is now for your Majesty to take it thoroughly to heart; and embrace it with the warmth with which an affair involving so much of your own interests deserves to be embraced.”

He avowed that without full confidence in his sovereign’s sympathy he would never have conceived the project. “I confess that the enterprise is great,” he said, “and that by many it will be considered rash. Certainly I should not have undertaken it, had I not felt certain of your Majesty’s full support.”

But he was already in danger of being forced to abandon the whole scheme —although so nearly carried into effect—for want of funds. “The million promised,” he wrote, “has arrived in bits and morsels, and with so many ceremonies, that I haven’t ten crowns at my disposal. How I am to maintain even this handful of soldiers—for the army is diminished to such a mere handful that it would astonish your Majesty—I am unable to imagine. It would move you to witness their condition. They have suffered as much as is humanly possible.”

Many of the troops, indeed, were deserting, and making their escape, beggared and desperate, into France, where, with natural injustice, they denounced their General,

whose whole heart was occupied with their miseries, for the delinquency of his master, whose mind was full of other schemes.

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"There past this way many Spanish soldiers," wrote Stafford from Paris, "so poor and naked as I ever saw any. There have been within this fortnight two hundred at a time in this town, who report the extremity of want of victuals in their camp, and that they have been twenty-four months without pay. They exclaim greatly upon the Prince of Parma. Mendoza seeks to convey them away, and to get money for them by all means he can."

Stafford urged upon his government the propriety of being at least as negligent as Philip had showed himself to be of the Spaniards. By prohibiting supplies to the besieging army, England might contribute, negatively, if not otherwise, to the relief of Antwerp. "There is no place," he wrote to Walsingham, "whence the Spaniards are so thoroughly victualled as from us. English boats go by sixteen and seventeen into Dunkirk, well laden with provisions."

This was certainly not in accordance with the interests nor the benevolent professions of the English ministers.

These supplies were not to be regularly depended upon however. They were likewise not to be had without paying a heavy price for them, and the Prince had no money in his coffer. He lived from hand to mouth, and was obliged to borrow from every private individual who had anything to lend. Merchants, nobles, official personages, were all obliged to assist in eking out the scanty pittance allowed by the sovereign.

"The million is all gone," wrote Parma to his master; "some to Verdugo in Friesland; some to repay the advances of Marquis Richebourg and other gentlemen. There is not a farthing for the garrisons. I can't go on a month longer, and, if not supplied, I shall be obliged to abandon the work. I have not money enough to pay my sailors, joiners, carpenters, and other mechanics, from week to week, and they will all leave me in the lurch, if I leave them unpaid. I have no resource but to rely on your Majesty. Otherwise the enterprise must wholly fail."

In case it did fail, the Prince wiped his hands of the responsibility. He certainly had the right to do so.

One of the main sources of supply was the city of Hertogenbosch, or Bois-le-Duc. It was one of the four chief cities of Brabant, and still held for the King, although many towns in its immediate neighbourhood had espoused the cause of the republic. The States had long been anxious to effect a diversion for the relief of Antwerp, by making an attack on Bois-le-Duc. Could they carry the place, Parma would be almost inevitably compelled to abandon the siege in which he was at present engaged, and he could moreover spare no troops for its defence. Bois-le-Duc was a populous, wealthy, thriving town, situate on the Deeze, two leagues above its confluence with the Meuse, and about twelve leagues from Antwerp. It derived its name of 'Duke's Wood' from a magnificent park and forest, once the favourite resort and residence of the old Dukes of Brabant,

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of which some beautiful vestiges still remained. It was a handsome well-built city, with two thousand houses of the better class, besides more humble tenements. Its citizens were celebrated for their courage and belligerent skill, both on foot and on horseback. They were said to retain more of the antique Belgic ferocity which Caesar had celebrated than that which had descended to most of their kinsmen. The place was, moreover, the seat of many prosperous manufactures. Its clothiers sent the products of their looms over all Christendom, and its linen and cutlery were equally renowned.

It would be a most fortunate blow in the cause of freedom to secure so, thriving and conspicuous a town, situated thus in the heart of what seemed the natural territory of the United States; and, by so doing, to render nugatory the mighty preparations of Parma against Antwerp. Moreover, it was known that there was no Spanish or other garrison within its walls, so that there was no opposition to be feared, except from the warlike nature of the citizens.

Count Hohenlo was entrusted, early in January, with this important enterprise. He accordingly collected a force of four thousand infantry, together with two hundred mounted lancers; having previously reconnoitered the ground. He relied very much, for the success of the undertaking, on Captain Kleerhagen, a Brussels nobleman, whose wife was a native of Bois-le-Duc, and who was thoroughly familiar with the locality. One dark winter's night, Kleerhagen, with fifty picked soldiers, advanced to the Antwerp gate of Bois-le-Duc, while Hohenlo, with his whole force, lay in ambush as near as possible to the city.

Between the drawbridge and the portcullis were two small guard-houses, which, very carelessly, had been left empty. Kleerhagen, with his fifty followers, successfully climbed into these lurking-places, where they quietly ensconced themselves for the night. At eight o'clock of the following morning (20th January) the guards of the gate drew up the portcullis, and reconnoitered. At the same instant, the ambushed fifty sprang from their concealment, put them to the sword, and made themselves masters of the gate. None of the night-watch escaped with life, save one poor old invalided citizen, whose business had been to draw up the portcullis, and who was severely wounded, and left for dead. The fifty immediately summoned all of Hohenlo's ambushade that were within hearing, and then, without waiting for them, entered the town pell-mell in the best of spirits, and shouting victory! victory! till they were hoarse. A single corporal, with two men, was left to guard the entrance. Meantime, the old wounded gate-opener, bleeding and crippled, crept into a dark corner, and laid himself down, unnoticed, to die.

Soon afterwards Hohenlo galloped into the town, clad in complete armour, his long curls floating in the wind, with about two hundred troopers clattering behind him, closely followed by five hundred pike-men on foot.

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Very brutally, foolishly, and characteristically, he had promised his followers the sacking of the city so soon as it should be taken. They accordingly set about the sacking, before it was taken. Hardly had the five or six hundred effected their entrance, than throwing off all control, they dispersed through the principal streets, and began bursting open the doors of the most opulent households. The cries of “victory!” “gained city!” “down with the Spaniards!” resounded on all sides. Many of the citizens, panic-struck, fled from their homes, which they thus abandoned to pillage, while, meantime, the loud shouts of the assailants reached the ears of the sergeant and his two companies who had been left in charge of the gate. Fearing that they should be cheated of their rightful share in the plunder, they at once abandoned their post, and set forth after their comrades, as fast as their legs could carry them.

Now it so chanced—although there was no garrison in the town—that forty Burgundian and Italian lancers, with about thirty foot-soldiers, had come in the day before to escort a train of merchandise. The Seigneur de Haultepenne, governor of Breda, a famous royalist commander—son of old Count Berlaymont, who first gave the name of “beggars” to the patriots—had accompanied them in the expedition. The little troop were already about to mount their horses to depart, when they became aware of the sudden tumult. Elmont, governor of the city, had also flown to the rescue, and had endeavoured to rally the burghers. Not unmindful of their ancient warlike fame, they had obeyed his entreaties. Elmont, with a strong party of armed citizens, joined himself to Haultepenne’s little band of lancers. They fired a few shots at straggling parties of plunderers, and pursued others up some narrow streets. They were but an handful in comparison with the number of the patriots, who had gained entrance to the city. They were, however, compact, united, and resolute. The assailants were scattered, disorderly, and bent only upon plunder. When attacked by an armed and regular band, they were amazed. They had been told that there was no garrison; and behold a choice phalanx of Spanish lancers, led on by one of the most famous of Philip’s Netherland chieftains. They thought themselves betrayed by Kleerhagen, entrapped into a deliberately arranged ambush. There was a panic. The soldiers, dispersed and doubtful, could not be rallied. Hohenlo, seeing that nothing was to be done with his five hundred, galloped furiously out of the gate, to bring in the rest of his troops who had remained outside the walls. The prize of the wealthy city of Bois-le-Duc was too tempting to be lightly abandoned; but he had much better have thought of making himself master of it himself before he should present it as a prey to his followers.

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During his absence the panic spread. The States' troops, bewildered, astonished, vigorously assaulted, turned their backs upon their enemies, and fled helter-skelter towards the gates, through which they had first gained admittance. But unfortunately for them, so soon as the corporal had left his position, the wounded old gate-opener, in a dying condition, had crawled forth on his hands and knees from a dark hole in the tower, cut, with a pocket-knife, the ropes of the portcullis, and then given up the ghost. Most effective was that blow struck by a dead man's hand. Down came the portcullis. The flying plunderers were entrapped. Close behind them came the excited burghers—their antique Belgic ferocity now fully aroused—firing away with carbine and matchlock, dealing about them with bludgeon and cutlass, and led merrily on by Haultepenne and Elmont armed in proof, at the head of their squadron of lancers. The unfortunate patriots had risen very early in the morning only to shear the wolf. Some were cut to pieces in the streets; others climbed the walls, and threw themselves head foremost into the moat. Many were drowned, and but a very few effected their escape. Justinus de Nassau sprang over the parapet, and succeeded in swimming the ditch. Klerhagen, driven into the Holy Cross tower, ascended to its roof, leaped, all accoutred as he was, into the river, and with the assistance of a Scotch soldier, came safe to land. Ferdinand Truchsess, brother of the ex-electoral of Cologne, was killed. Four or five hundred of the assailants—nearly all who had entered the city—were slain, and about fifty of the burghers.

Hohenlo soon came back, with Colonel Ysselstein, and two thousand fresh troops. But their noses, says a contemporary, grew a hundred feet long with surprise when they saw the gate shut in their faces. It might have occurred to the Count, when he rushed out of the town for reinforcements, that it would be as well to replace the guard, which—as he must have seen—had abandoned their post.

Cursing his folly, he returned, mavelously discomfited, and deservedly censured, to Gertruydenberg. And thus had a most important enterprise; which had nearly been splendidly successful, ended in disaster and disgrace. To the recklessness of the general, to the cupidity which he had himself awakened in his followers, was the failure alone to be attributed. Had he taken possession of the city with a firm grasp at the head of his four thousand men, nothing could have resisted him; Haultepenne, and his insignificant force, would have been dead, or his prisoners; the basis of Parma's magnificent operations would have been withdrawn; Antwerp would have been saved.

"Infinite gratitude," wrote Parma to Philip, "should be rendered to the Lord. Great thanks are also due to Haultepenne. Had the rebels succeeded in their enterprise against Bolduc, I should have been compelled to abandon the siege of Antwerp. The town; by its strength and situation, is of infinite importance for the reduction both of that place and of Brussels, and the rebels in possession of Bolduc would have cut off my supplies."

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The Prince recommended Haultepenne most warmly to the King as deserving of a rich “merced.” The true hero of the day, however—at least the chief agent in the victory was the poor, crushed, nameless victim who had cut the ropes of the portcullis at the Antwerp gate.

Hohenlo was deeply stung by the disgrace which he had incurred. For a time he sought oblivion in hard drinking; but—brave and energetic, though reckless—he soon became desirous of retrieving his reputation by more successful enterprises. There was no lack of work, and assuredly his hands were rarely idle.

“Hollach (Hohenlo) is gone from hence on Friday last,” wrote Davison to Walsingham, “he will do what he may to recover his reputation lost in the attempt, of Bois-le-Duc; which, for the grief and trouble he hath conceived thereof, hath for the time greatly altered him.”

Meantime the turbulent Scheldt, lashed by the storms of winter, was becoming a more formidable enemy to Parma’s great enterprise than the military demonstrations of his enemies, or the famine which was making such havoc, with his little army. The ocean-tides were rolling huge ice-blocks up and down, which beat against his palisade with the noise of thunder, and seemed to threaten its immediate destruction. But the work stood firm. The piles supporting the piers, which had been thrust out from each bank into the stream, had been driven fifty feet into the river’s bed, and did their duty well. But in the space between, twelve hundred and forty feet in width, the current was too deep for pile-driving and a permanent bridge was to be established upon boats. And that bridge was to be laid across the icy and tempestuous flood, in the depth of winter, in the teeth of a watchful enemy, with the probability of an immediate invasion from France, where the rebel envoys were known to be negotiating on express invitation of the King—by half-naked, half-starving soldiers and sailors, unpaid for years, and for the sake of a master who seemed to have forgotten their existence.

“Thank God,” wrote Alexander, “the palisade stands firm in spite of the ice. Now with the favour of the Lord, we shall soon get the fruit we have been hoping, if your Majesty is not wanting in that to which your grandeur, your great Christianity, your own interests, oblige you. In truth ’tis a great and heroic work, worthy the great power of your Majesty.” “For my own part,” he continued, “I have done what depended upon me. From your own royal hand must emanate the rest;—men, namely, sufficient to maintain the posts, and money enough to support them there.”

He expressed himself in the strongest language concerning the danger to the royal cause from the weak and gradually sinking condition of the army. Even without the French intrigues with the rebels, concerning which, in his ignorance of the exact state of affairs, he expressed much anxiety, it would be impossible, he said, to save the royal cause without men and money.

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"I have spared myself," said the Prince, "neither day nor night. Let not your Majesty impute the blame to me if we fail. Verdugo also is uttering a perpetual cry out of Friesland for men—men and money."

Yet, notwithstanding all these obstacles, the bridge was finished at last. On the 25th February, (1585) the day sacred to Saint Matthew, and of fortunate augury to the Emperor Charles, father of Philip and grandfather of Alexander, the Scheldt was closed.

As already stated, from Fort Saint Mary on the Kalloo side, and from Fort Philip, not far from Ordain on the Brabant shore of the Scheldt, strong structures, supported upon piers, had been projected, reaching, respectively, five hundred feet into the stream. These two opposite ends were now connected by a permanent bridge of boats. There were thirty-two of these barges, each of them sixty-two feet in length and twelve in breadth, the spaces between each couple being twenty-two feet wide, and all being bound together, stem, stern, and midships, by quadruple hawsers and chains. Each boat was anchored at stem and stern with loose cables. Strong timbers, with cross rafters, were placed upon the boats, upon which heavy frame-work the planked pathway was laid down. A thick parapet of closely-fitting beams was erected along both the outer edges of the whole fabric. Thus a continuous and well-fortified bridge, two thousand four hundred feet in length, was stretched at last from shore to shore. Each of the thirty-two boats on which the central portion of the structure reposed, was a small fortress provided with two heavy pieces of artillery, pointing, the one up, the other down the stream, and manned by thirty-two soldiers and four sailors, defended by a breastwork formed of gabions of great thickness.

The forts of Saint Philip and St. Mary, at either end of the bridge, had each ten great guns, and both were filled with soldiers. In front of each fort, moreover, was stationed a fleet of twenty armed vessels, carrying heavy pieces of artillery; ten anchored at the angle towards Antwerp, and as many looking down the river. One hundred and seventy great guns, including the armaments of the boats under the bridge of the armada and the forts, protected the whole structure, pointing up and down the stream.

But, besides these batteries, an additional precaution had been taken. On each side, above and below the bridge, at a moderate distance—a bow shot—was anchored a heavy, raft floating upon empty barrels. Each raft was composed of heavy timbers, bound together in bunches of three, the spaces between being connected by ships' masts and lighter spar-work, and with a tooth-like projection along the whole outer edge, formed of strong rafters, pointed and armed with sharp prongs and hooks of iron. Thus a serried phalanx, as it were, of spears stood ever on guard to protect the precious inner structure. Vessels coming from Zeeland or Antwerp, and the floating ice-masses, which were almost as formidable, were obliged to make their first attack upon these dangerous outer defences. Each raft, floating in the middle of the stream, extended twelve hundred, and fifty-two feet across, thus protecting the whole of the bridge of boats and a portion of that resting upon piles.

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Such was the famous bridge of Parma. The magnificent undertaking has been advantageously compared with the celebrated Rhine-bridge of Julius Caesar. When it is remembered; however; that the Roman work was performed in summer, across a river only half as broad as the Scheldt, free from the disturbing, action of the tides; and flowing through an unresisting country; while the whole character of the structure; intended only to, serve for the single passage of an army, was far inferior to the massive solidity of Parma's bridge; it seems not unreasonable to assign the superiority to the general who had surmounted all the obstacles of a northern winter, vehement ebb and flow from the sea, and enterprising and desperate enemies at every point.

When the citizens, at last, looked upon the completed fabric, converted from the "dream," which they had pronounced it to be, into a terrible reality; when they saw the shining array of Spanish and Italian legions marching and counter-marching upon their new road; and trampling, as it were; the turbulent river beneath their feet; when they witnessed the solemn military spectacle with which the Governor-General celebrated his success, amid peals of cannon and shouts of triumph from his army, they bitterly bewailed their own folly. Yet even then they could hardly believe that the work had been accomplished by human agency, but they loudly protested that invisible demons had been summoned to plan and perfect this fatal and preter-human work. They were wrong. There had been but one demon—one clear, lofty intelligence, inspiring a steady and untiring hand. The demon was the intellect of Alexander Farnese; but it had been assisted in its labour by the hundred devils of envy, covetousness, jealousy, selfishness, distrust, and discord, that had housed, not, in his camp, but in the ranks of those who were contending for their hearths and altars.

And thus had the Prince arrived at success in spite of every obstacle. He took a just pride in the achievement, yet he knew by how many dangers he was still surrounded, and he felt hurt at his sovereign's neglect. "The enterprise at Antwerp," he wrote to Philip on the day the bridge was completed, "is so great and heroic that to celebrate it would require me to speak more at large than I like, to do, for fear of being tedious to your Majesty. What I will say, is that the labours and difficulties have been every day so, great, that if your Majesty knew them, you would estimate, what we have done more highly than-you do; and not forget us so utterly, leaving us to die of hunger."

He considered the fabric in itself almost impregnable, provided he were furnished with the means to maintain what he had so painfully constructed.

"The whole is in such condition," said he, "that in opinion of all competent military judges it would stand though all Holland and Zeeland should come to destroy our, palisades. Their attacks must be made at immense danger, and disadvantage, so severely can we play upon them with our artillery and musketry. Every boat is, garnished with the most dainty captains and soldiers, so that if the enemy should attempt to assail us now, they would come back with broken heads."

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Yet in the midst of his apparent triumph he had, at times, almost despair in his heart. He felt really at the last gasp. His troops had dwindled to the mere shadow of an army, and they were forced to live almost upon air. The cavalry had nearly vanished. The garrisons in the different cities were starving. The burghers had no food for the soldiers nor for themselves. "As for the rest of the troops," said Alexander, "they are stationed where they have nothing to subsist upon, save salt water and the dykes, and if the Lord does not grant a miracle, succour, even if sent by your Majesty, will arrive too late." He assured his master, that he could not go on more than five or six days longer, that he had been feeding his soldiers for a long time from hand to mouth, and that it would soon be impossible for him to keep his troops together. If he did not disband them they would run away.

His pictures were most dismal, his supplications for money very moving but he never alluded to himself. All his anxiety, all his tenderness, were for his soldiers. "They must have food," he said: "'Tis impossible to sustain them any longer by driblets, as I have done for a long time. Yet how can I do it without money? And I have none at all, nor do I see where to get a single florin."

But these revelations were made only to his master's most secret ear. His letters, deciphered after three centuries, alone make manifest the almost desperate condition in which the apparently triumphant general was placed, and the facility with which his antagonists, had they been well guided and faithful to themselves, might have driven him into the sea.

But to those adversaries he maintained an attitude of serene and smiling triumph. A spy, sent from the city to obtain intelligence for the anxious burghers, had gained admission into his lines, was captured and brought before the Prince. He expected, of course, to be immediately hanged. On the contrary, Alexander gave orders that he should be conducted over every part of the encampment. The forts, the palisades, the bridge, were all to be carefully exhibited and explained to him as if he had been a friendly visitor entitled to every information. He was requested to count the pieces of artillery in the forts, on the bridge, in the armada. After thoroughly studying the scene he was then dismissed with a safe-conduct to the city.

"Go back to those who sent you," said the Prince. "Convey to them the information in quest of which you came. Apprise them of every thing which you have inspected, counted, heard explained. Tell them further, that the siege will never be abandoned, and that this bridge will be my sepulcher or my pathway into Antwerp."

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And now the aspect of the scene was indeed portentous. The chimera had become a very visible bristling reality. There stood the bridge which the citizens had ridiculed while it was growing before their faces. There scowled the Kowenstyn—black with cannon, covered all over with fortresses which the butchers had so sedulously preserved. From Parma's camp at Beveren and Kalloo a great fortified road led across the river and along the fatal dyke all the way to the entrenchments at Stabroek, where Mansfeld's army lay. Grim Mondragon held the "holy cross" and the whole Kowenstyn in his own iron grasp. A chain of forts, built and occupied by the contending hosts of the patriots and the Spaniards, were closely packed together along both banks of the Scheldt, nine miles long from Antwerp to Lillo, and interchanged perpetual cannonades. The country all around, once fertile as a garden, had been changed into a wild and wintry sea where swarms of gun-boats and other armed vessels manoeuvred and contended with each other over submerged villages and orchards, and among half-drowned turrets and steeples. Yet there rose the great bulwark—whose early destruction would have made all this desolation a blessing—unbroken and obstinate; a perpetual obstacle to communication between Antwerp and Zeeland. The very spirit of the murdered Prince of Orange seemed to rise sadly and reproachfully out of the waste of waters, as if to rebuke the men who had been so deaf to his solemn warnings.

Brussels, too, wearied and worn, its heart sick with hope deferred, now fell into despair as the futile result of the French negotiation became apparent. The stately and opulent city had long been in a most abject condition. Many of its inhabitants attempted to escape from the horrors of starving by flying from its walls. Of the fugitives, the men were either scourged back by the Spaniards into the city, or hanged up along the road-side. The women were treated, leniently, even playfully, for it was thought an excellent jest to cut off the petticoats of the unfortunate starving creatures up to their knees, and then command them to go back and starve at home with their friends and fellow-citizens. A great many persons literally died of hunger. Matrons with large families poisoned their children and themselves to avoid the more terrible death by starving. At last, when Vilvoorde was taken, when the baseness of the French King was thoroughly understood, when Parma's bridge was completed and the Scheldt bridled, Brussels capitulated on as favourable terms as could well have been expected.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

College of "peace-makers," who wrangled more than all
Military virtue in the support of an infamous cause
Not distinguished for their docility
Repentance, as usual, had come many hours too late

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