

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

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1585c 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 40

History United Netherlands, 1585

CHAPTER V., Part 2.

Position of Alexander and his Army—La Motte attempts in vain Ostend—Patriots gain Liefkenshoek—Projects of Gianibelli—Alarm on the Bridge—The Fire Ships—The Explosion—Its Results—Death of the Viscount of Ghent—Perpetual Anxiety of Farnese—Impoverished State of the Spaniards—Intended Attack of the Kowenstyn—Second Attack of the Kowenstyn—A Landing effected—A sharp Combat—The Dyke pierced—Rally of the Spaniards—Parma comes to the Rescue—Fierce Struggle on the Dyke—The Spaniards successful—Premature Triumph at Antwerp—Defeat of the Patriots—The Ship War's End—Despair of the Citizens



Notwithstanding these triumphs, Parma was much inconvenienced by not possessing the sea-coast of Flanders. Ostend was a perpetual stumbling-block to him. He therefore assented, with pleasure to a proposition made by La Motte, one of the most experienced and courageous of the Walloon royalist, commanders, to attempt the place by surprise. And La Motte; at the first blow; was more than half successful.

On the night of the 29th March, (1585) with two thousand foot and twelve hundred cavalry, he carried the whole of the old port of Ostend. Leaving a Walloon officer, in whom he had confidence, to guard the position already gained, he went back in person for reinforcements. During his advance, the same ill luck attended his enterprise which had blasted Hohenlo's achievement at Bois-le-Duc. The soldiers he left behind him deserted their posts for the sake of rifling the town. The officer in command, instead of keeping them to their duty, joined in the chase. The citizens roused themselves, attacked their invaders, killed many of them, and put the rest to flight. When La Motte returned; he found the panic general. His whole force, including the fresh soldiers just brought to the rescue, were beside themselves with fear. He killed several with his own hand, but the troops were not to be rallied. His quick triumph was changed into an absolute defeat.

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Parma, furious at the ignominious result of a plan from which so much had been expected, ordered the Walloon captain, from whose delinquency so much disaster had resulted, to be forthwith hanged. "Such villainy," said he, "must never go unpunished."

It was impossible for the Prince to send a second expedition to attempt the reduction of Ostend, for the patriots were at last arousing themselves to the necessity of exertion. It was very obvious—now that the bridge had been built, and the Kowenstyn fortified—that one or the other was to be destroyed, or Antwerp abandoned to its fate.

The patriots had been sleeping, as it were, all the winter, hugging the delusive dream of French sovereignty and French assistance. No language can exaggerate the deadly effects from the slow poison of that negotiation. At any rate, the negotiation was now concluded. The dream was dispelled. Antwerp must now fall, or a decisive blow must be struck by the patriots themselves, and a telling blow had been secretly and maturely meditated. Certain preparatory steps were however necessary.

The fort of Liefkenshoek, "darling's corner," was a most important post. The patriots had never ceased to regret that precious possession, lost, as we have seen, in so tragical a manner on the very day of Orange's death. Fort Lillo, exactly opposite, on the Brabant shore of the Scheldt, had always been securely held by them; and was their strongest position. Were both places in their power, the navigation of the river, at least as far as the bridge, would be comparatively secure.

A sudden dash was made upon Liefkenshoek. A number of armed vessels sailed up from Zeeland, under command of Justinus de Nassau. They were assisted from Fort Lillo by a detachment headed by Count Hohenlo. These two officers were desirous of retrieving the reputation which they had lost at Bois-le-Duc. They were successful, and the "darling" fort was carried at a blow. After a brief cannonade, the patriots made a breach, effected a landing, and sprang over the ramparts. The Walloons and Spaniards fled in dismay; many of them were killed in the fort, and along the dykes; others were hurled into the Scheldt. The victors followed up their success by reducing, with equal impetuosity, the fort of Saint Anthony, situate in the neighbourhood farther down the river. They thus gained entire command of all the high ground, which remained in that quarter above the inundation, and was called the Doel.

The dyke, on which Liefkenshoek stood, led up the river towards Kalloo, distant less than a league. There were Parma's head-quarters and the famous bridge. But at Fort Saint Mary; where the Flemish head of that bridge rested, the dyke was broken. Upon that broken end the commanders of the expedition against Liefkenshoek were ordered to throw up an entrenchment, without loss of a moment, so soon as they should have gained the fortresses which they were ordered first to assault. Sainte Aldegonde had given urgent written directions to this effect. From a redoubt situated thus, in the very face of Saint Mary's, that position, the palisade-work, the whole bridge, might be battered with all the artillery that could be brought from Zeeland.



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But Parma was beforehand with them. Notwithstanding his rage and mortification that Spanish soldiers should have ignominiously lost the important fortress which Richebourg had conquered so brilliantly nine months before, he was not the man to spend time in unavailing regrets. His quick eye instantly, detected the flaw which might soon be fatal. In the very same night of the loss of Liefkenshoek, he sent as strong a party as could be spared, with plenty of sappers and miners, in flat-bottomed boats across from Kalloo. As the morning dawned, an improvised fortress, with the Spanish flag waving above its bulwarks, stood on the broken end of the dyke. That done, he ordered one of the two captains who had commanded in Liefkenshoek and Saint Anthony to be beheaded on the same dyke. The other was dismissed with ignominy. Ostend was, of course, given up; "but it was not a small matter," said Parma, "to fortify ourselves that very night upon the ruptured place, and so prevent the rebels from doing it, which would have been very mal-a-propos."

Nevertheless, the rebels had achieved a considerable success; and now or never the telling blow, long meditated, was to be struck.

There lived in Antwerp a subtle Mantuan, Gianibelli by name, who had married and been long settled in the city. He had made himself busy with various schemes for victualling the place. He had especially urged upon the authorities, at an early period of the siege, the propriety of making large purchases of corn and storing it in magazines at a time when famine-price had by no means been reached. But the leading men had then their heads full of a great ship, or floating castle, which they were building, and which they had pompously named the 'War's End,' 'Fin de la Guerre.' We shall hear something of this phenomenon at a later period. Meanwhile, Gianibelli, who knew something of shipbuilding, as he did of most other useful matters, ridiculed the design, which was likely to cost, in itself before completion, as much money as would keep the city in bread for a third of a year.

Gianibelli was no patriot. He was purely a man of science and of great acquirements, who was looked upon by the ignorant populace alternately as a dreamer and a wizard. He was as indifferent to the cause of freedom as of despotism, but he had a great love for chemistry. He was also a profound mechanic, second to no man of his age in theoretic and practical engineering.

He had gone from Italy to Spain that he might offer his services to Philip, and give him the benefit of many original and ingenious inventions. Forced to dance attendance, day after day, among sneering courtiers and insolent placemen, and to submit to the criticism of practical sages and philosophers of routine, while, he was constantly denied an opportunity of explaining his projects, the quick-tempered Italian had gone away at last, indignant. He had then vowed revenge upon the dulness by which his genius had been slighted, and had sworn that the next time the Spaniards heard the name of the man whom they had dared to deride, they should hear it with tears.



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He now laid before the senate of Antwerp a plan for some vessels likely to prove more effective than the gigantic 'War's End,' which he had prophesied would prove a failure. With these he pledged himself to destroy the bridge. He demanded three ships which he had selected from the city fleet; the 'Orange,' the 'Post,' and the 'Golden Lion,' measuring, respectively, one hundred and fifty, three hundred and fifty, and five hundred tons. Besides these, he wished sixty flat-bottomed scows, which he proposed to send down the river, partially submerged, disposed in the shape of a half moon, with innumerable anchors and grapnel's thrusting themselves out of the water at every point. This machine was intended to operate against the raft.

Ignorance and incredulity did their work, as usual, and Gianbelli's request was refused. As a quarter-measure, nevertheless, he was allowed to take two smaller vessels of seventy and eighty tons. The Italian was disgusted with parsimony upon so momentous an occasion, but he at the same time determined, even with these slender materials, to give an exhibition of his power.

Not all his the glory, however, of the ingenious project. Associated with him were two skilful artizans of Antwerp; a clockmaker named Bory, and a mechanic named Timmerman—but Gianibelli was the chief and superintendent of the whole daring enterprise.

He gave to his two ships the cheerful names of the 'Fortune' and the 'Hope,' and set himself energetically to justify their titles by their efficiency. They were to be marine volcanos, which, drifting down the river with tide, were to deal destruction where the Spaniards themselves most secure.

In the hold of each vessel, along the whole length, was laid down a solid flooring of brick and mortar, one foot thick and five feet wide. Upon this was built a chamber of marble mason-work, forty feet long, three and a half feet broad, as many high, and with side-walks [walls? D.W.] five feet in thickness.

This was the crater. It was filled with seven thousand of gunpowder, of a kind superior to anything known, and prepared by Gianibelli himself. It was covered with a roof, six feet in thickness, formed of blue tombstones, placed edgewise. Over this crater, rose a hollow cone, or pyramid, made of heavy marble slabs, and filled with mill-stones, cannon balls, blocks of marble, chain-shot, iron hooks, plough-coulters, and every dangerous missile that could be imagined. The spaces between the mine and the sides of each ship were likewise filled with paving stones, iron-bound stakes, harpoons, and other projectiles. The whole fabric was then covered by a smooth light flooring of planks and brick-work, upon which was a pile of wood: This was to be lighted at the proper time, in order that the two vessels might present the appearance of simple fire-ships, intended only to excite a conflagration of the bridge. On the 'Fortune' a slow match, very carefully prepared, communicated with the submerged mine, which was to explode at a nicely-calculated moment. The eruption of the other floating volcano was

to be regulated by an ingenious piece of clock-work, by which, at the appointed time, fire, struck from a flint, was to inflame the hidden mass of gunpowder below.



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In addition to these two infernal machines, or “hell-burners,” as they were called, a fleet of thirty-two smaller vessels was prepared. Covered with tar, turpentine, rosin, and filled with inflammable and combustible materials, these barks were to be sent from Antwerp down the river in detachments of eight every half hour with the ebb tide. The object was to clear the way, if possible, of the raft, and to occupy the attention of the Spaniards, until the ‘Fortune’ and the ‘Hope’ should come down upon the bridge.

The 5th April, (1885) being the day following that on which the successful assault upon Liefkenshoek and Saint Anthony had taken place, was fixed for the descent of the fire-ships. So soon as it should be dark, the thirty-two lesser burning-vessels, under the direction of Admiral Jacob Jacobzoon, were to be sent forth from the neighborhood of the ‘Boor’s Sconce’—a fort close to the city walls—in accordance with the Italian’s plan. “Run-a-way Jacob,” however, or “Koppen Loppen,” had earned no new laurels which could throw into the shade that opprobrious appellation. He was not one of Holland’s naval heroes, but, on the whole, a very incompetent officer; exactly the man to damage the best concerted scheme which the genius of others could invent. Accordingly, Koppen-Loppen began with a grave mistake. Instead of allowing the precursory fire-ships to drift down the stream, at the regular intervals agreed upon, he despatched them all rapidly, and helter skelter, one after another, as fast as they could be set forth on their career. Not long afterwards, he sent the two “hellburners,” the ‘Fortune’ and the ‘Hope,’ directly in their wake. Thus the whole fiery fleet had set forth, almost at once, upon its fatal voyage.

It was known to Parma that preparations for an attack were making at Antwerp, but as to the nature of the danger he was necessarily in the dark. He was anticipating an invasion by a fleet from the city in combination with a squadron of Zeelanders coming up from below. So soon as the first vessels, therefore, with their trains not yet lighted, were discovered bearing down from the city, he was confirmed in his conjecture. His drama and trumpets instantly called to arms, and the whole body of his troops was mustered upon the bridge; the palisades, and in the nearest forts. Thus the preparations to avoid or to contend with the danger, were leading the Spaniards into the very jaws of destruction. Alexander, after crossing and recrossing the river, giving minute directions for repelling the expected assault, finally stationed himself in the block-house at the point of junction, on the Flemish aide, between the palisade and the bridge of boats. He was surrounded by a group of superior officers, among whom Richebourg, Billy, Gaetano, Cessis, and the Englishman Sir Rowland Yorke, were conspicuous.



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It was a dark, mild evening of early spring. As the fleet of vessels dropped slowly down the river, they suddenly became luminous, each ship flaming out of the darkness, a phantom of living fire. The very waves of the Scheldt seemed glowing with the conflagration, while its banks were lighted up with a preternatural glare. It was a wild, pompous, theatrical spectacle. The array of soldiers on both sides the river, along the dykes and upon the bridge, with banners waving, and spear and cuirass glancing in the lurid light; the demon fleet, guided by no human hand, wrapped in flames, and flitting through the darkness, with irregular movement; but portentous aspect, at the caprice of wind and tide; the death-like silence of expectation, which had succeeded the sound of trumpet and the shouts of the soldiers; and the weird glow which had supplanted the darkness—all combined with the sense of imminent and mysterious danger to excite and oppress the imagination.

Presently, the Spaniards, as they gazed from the bridge, began to take heart again. One after another, many of the lesser vessels drifted blindly against the raft, where they entangled themselves among the hooks and gigantic spearheads, and burned slowly out without causing any extensive conflagration. Others grounded on the banks of the river, before reaching their destination. Some sank in the stream.

Last of all came the two infernal ships, swaying unsteadily with the current; the pilots of course, as they neared the bridge, having noiselessly effected their escape in the skiffs. The slight fire upon the deck scarcely illuminated the dark phantom-like hulls. Both were carried by the current clear of the raft, which, by a great error of judgment, as it now appeared, on the part of the builders, had only been made to protect the floating portion of the bridge. The 'Fortune' came first, staggering inside the raft, and then lurching clumsily against the dyke, and grounding near Kalloo, without touching the bridge. There was a moment's pause of expectation. At last the slow match upon the deck burned out, and there was a faint and partial explosion, by which little or no damage was produced.

Parma instantly called for volunteers to board the mysterious vessel. The desperate expedition was headed by the bold Roland York, a Londoner, of whom one day there was more to be heard in Netherland history. The party sprang into the deserted and now harmless volcano, extinguishing the slight fires that were smouldering on the deck, and thrusting spears and long poles into the hidden recesses of the hold. There was, however, little time to pursue these perilous investigations, and the party soon made their escape to the bridge.

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The troops of Parma, crowding on the palisade, and looking over the parapets, now began to greet the exhibition with peals of derisive laughter. It was but child's play, they thought, to threaten a Spanish army, and a general like Alexander Farnese, with such paltry fire-works as these. Nevertheless all eyes were anxiously fixed upon the remaining fire-ship, or "hell-burner," the 'Hope,' which had now drifted very near the place of its destination. Tearing her way between the raft and the shore, she struck heavily against the bridge on the Kalloo side, close to the block-house at the commencement of the floating portion of the bridge. A thin wreath of smoke was seen curling over a slight and smouldering fire upon her deck.

Marquis Richebourg, standing on the bridge, laughed loudly at the apparently impotent conclusion of the whole adventure. It was his last laugh on earth. A number of soldiers, at Parma's summons, instantly sprang on board this second mysterious vessel, and occupied themselves, as the party on board the 'Fortune' had done, in extinguishing the flames, and in endeavoring to ascertain the nature of the machine. Richebourg boldly directed from the bridge their hazardous experiments.

At the same moment a certain ensign De Vega, who stood near the Prince of Parma, close to the block-house, approached him with vehement entreaties that he should retire. Alexander refused to stir from the spot, being anxious to learn the result of these investigations. Vega, moved by some instinctive and irresistible apprehension, fell upon his knees, and plucking the General earnestly by the cloak, implored him with such passionate words and gestures to leave the place, that the Prince reluctantly yielded.

It was not a moment too soon. The clockwork had been better adjusted than the slow match in the 'Fortune.' Scarcely had Alexander reached the entrance of Saint Mary's Fort, at the end of the bridge, when a horrible explosion was heard. The 'Hope' disappeared, together with the men who had boarded her, and the block-house, against which she had struck, with all its garrison, while a large portion of the bridge, with all the troops stationed upon it, had vanished into air. It was the work of a single instant. The Scheldt yawned to its lowest depth, and then cast its waters across the dykes, deep into the forts, and far over the land. The earth shook as with the throb of a volcano. A wild glare lighted up the scene for one moment, and was then succeeded by pitchy darkness. Houses were toppled down miles away, and not a living thing, even in remote places, could keep its feet. The air was filled with a rain of plough-shares, grave-stones, and marble balls, intermixed with the heads, limbs, and bodies, of what had been human beings. Slabs of granite, vomited by the flaming ship, were found afterwards at a league's distance, and buried deep in the earth. A thousand soldiers were destroyed in a second of time; many of them being torn to shreds, beyond even the semblance of humanity.

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Richebourg disappeared, and was not found until several days later, when his body was discovered; doubled around an iron chain, which hung from one of the bridge-boats in the centre of the river. The veteran Robles, Seigneur de Billy, a Portuguese officer of eminent service and high military rank, was also destroyed. Months afterwards, his body was discovered adhering to the timber-work of the bridge, upon the ultimate removal of that structure, and was only recognized by a peculiar gold chain which he habitually wore. Parma himself was thrown to the ground, stunned by a blow on the shoulder from a flying stake. The page, who was behind him, carrying his helmet, fell dead without a wound, killed by the concussion of the air.

Several strange and less tragical incidents occurred. The Viscomte de Bruxelles was blown out of a boat on the Flemish side, and descended safe and, sound into another in the centre of the stream. Captain Tucci, clad in complete armour, was whirled out of a fort, shot perpendicularly into the air, and then fell back into the river. Being of a cool temperament, a good swimmer, and very pious, he skilfully divested himself of cuirass and helmet, recommended himself to the Blessed Virgin, and swam safely ashore. Another young officer of Parma's body-guard, Francois de Liege by name, standing on the Kalloo end of the bridge, rose like a feather into the clouds, and, flying quite across the river, alighted on the opposite bank with no further harm than a contused shoulder. He imagined himself (he said afterwards) to have been changed into a cannon-ball, as he rushed through the pitchy atmosphere, propelled by a blast of irresistible fury.

[The chief authorities used in the foregoing account of this famous enterprise are those already cited on a previous page, *viz.*: the *Ms. Letters of the Prince of Parma* in the Archives of Simancas; Bor, ii. 596, 597; Strada, H. 334 seq.; Meteren, xii. 223; Hoofd Vervolgh, 91; Baudartii *Polemographia*, ii. 24-27; Bentivoglio, *etc.*, I have not thought it necessary to cite them step by step; for all the accounts, with some inevitable and unimportant discrepancies, agree with each other. The most copious details are to be found in Strada and in Bor.]

It had been agreed that Admiral Jacobzoon should, immediately after the explosion of the fire-ships, send an eight-oared barge to ascertain the amount of damage. If a breach had been effected, and a passage up to the city opened, he was to fire a rocket. At this signal, the fleet stationed at Lillo, carrying a heavy armament, laden with provisions enough to relieve Antwerp from all anxiety, and ready to sail on the instant, was at once to force its way up the river.

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The deed was done. A breach, two hundred feet in width was made. Had the most skilful pilot in Zeeland held the helm of the 'Hope,' with a choice crew obedient to his orders, he could not have guided her more carefully than she had been directed by wind and tide. Avoiding the raft which lay in her way, she had, as it were, with the intelligence of a living creature, fulfilled the wishes of the daring genius that had created her; and laid herself alongside the bridge, exactly at the most telling point. She had then destroyed herself, precisely at the right moment. All the effects, and more than all, that had been predicted by the Mantuan wizard had come to pass. The famous bridge was cleft through and through, and a thousand picked men—Parma's very "daintiest"—were blown out of existence. The Governor-General himself was lying stark and stiff upon the bridge which he said should be his triumphal monument or his tomb. His most distinguished officers were dead, and all the survivors were dumb and blind with astonishment at the unheard of, convulsion. The passage was open for the fleet, and the fleet, lay below with sails spread, and oars in the rowlocks, only waiting for the signal to bear up at once to the scene of action, to smite out of existence all that remained of the splendid structure, and to carry relief and triumph into Antwerp.

Not a soul slept in the city. The explosion had shook its walls, and thousands of people thronged the streets, their hearts beating high with expectation. It was a moment of exquisite triumph. The 'Hope,' word of happy augury, had not been relied upon in vain, and Parma's seven months of patient labour had been annihilated in a moment. Sainte Aldegonde and Gianibelli stood in the 'Boors' Sconce' on the edge of the river. They had felt and heard the explosion, and they were now straining their eyes through the darkness to mark the flight of the welcome rocket.

That rocket never rose. And it is enough, even after the lapse of three centuries, to cause a pang in every heart that beats for human liberty to think of the bitter disappointment which crushed these great and legitimate hopes. The cause lay in the incompetency and cowardice of the man who had been so unfortunately entrusted with a share in a noble enterprise.

Admiral Jacobzoon, paralyzed by the explosion, which announced his own triumph, sent off the barge, but did not wait for its return. The boatmen, too, appalled by the sights and sounds which they had witnessed, and by the murky darkness which encompassed them, did not venture near the scene of action, but, after rowing for a short interval hither and thither, came back with the lying report that nothing had been accomplished, and that the bridge remained unbroken. Sainte Aldegonde and Gianibelli were beside themselves with rage, as they surmised the imbecility of the Admiral, and devoted him in their hearts to the gallows, which he certainly deserved. The wrath of the keen Italian may be conceived, now that his ingenious and entirely successful scheme was thus rendered fruitless by the blunders of the incompetent Fleming.



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On the other side, there was a man whom no danger could appall. Alexander had been thought dead, and the dismay among his followers was universal. He was known to have been standing an instant before the explosion on the very block-house where the 'Hope' had struck. After the first terrible moments had passed, his soldiers found their general lying, as if in a trance, on the threshold of St. Mary's Fort, his drawn sword in his hand, with Cessis embracing his knees, and Gaetano extended at his side, stunned with a blow upon the head.

Recovering from his swoon, Parma was the first to spring to his feet. Sword in hand, he rushed at once upon the bridge to mark the extent of the disaster. The admirable structure, the result of so much patient and intelligent energy, was fearfully shattered; the bridge, the river, and the shore, strewed with the mangled bodies of his soldiers. He expected, as a matter of certainty, that the fleet from below would instantly force its passage, destroy the remainder of his troops—stunned as they were with the sudden catastrophe complete the demolition of the bridge, and then make its way to Antwerp, with ample reinforcements and supplies. And Alexander saw that the expedition would be successful. Momentarily expecting the attack, he maintained his courage and semblance of cheerfulness, with despair in his heart.

His winter's work seemed annihilated, and it was probable that he should be obliged to raise the siege. Nevertheless, he passed in person from rank to rank, from post to post, seeing that the wounded were provided for, encouraging those that remained unhurt, and endeavouring to infuse a portion of his own courage into the survivors of his panic-stricken army.

Nor was he entirely unsuccessful, as the night wore on and the expected assault was still delayed. Without further loss of time, he employed his men to collect the drifting boats, timber, and spar-work, and to make a hasty and temporary restoration—in semblance at least—of the ruined portion of his bridge. And thus he employed himself steadily all the night, although expecting every instant to hear the first broadside of the Zeeland cannon. When morning broke, and it became obvious that the patriots were unable or unwilling to follow up their own success, the Governor-General felt as secure as ever. He at once set about the thorough repairs of his great work, and—before he could be again molested—had made good the damage which it had sustained.

It was not till three days afterwards that the truth was known in Antwerp. Hohenlo then sent down a messenger, who swam, under the bridge, ascertained the exact state of affairs, and returned, when it was too late, with the first intelligence of the triumph which had been won and lost. The disappointment and mortification were almost intolerable. And thus had. Run-a-way Jacob, 'Koppen Loppen,' blasted the hopes of so many wiser and braver spirits than his own.



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The loss to Parma and to the royalist cause in Marquis Richebourg, was very great. The death of De Billy, who was a faithful, experienced, and courageous general, was also much lamented. "The misfortune from their death," said Parma, "is not to be exaggerated. Each was ever ready to do his duty in your Majesty's service, and to save me much fatigue in all my various affairs. Nevertheless," continued the Prince, with great piety, "we give the Lord thanks for all, and take as a favour everything which comes from His hand."

Alexander had indeed reason to deplore the loss of Robert de Melun, Viscount of Ghent, Marquis of Roubaix and Richebourg. He was a most valuable officer. His wealth was great. It had been recently largely increased by the confiscation of his elder brother's estates for his benefit, a measure which at Parma's intercession had been accorded by the King. That brother was the patriotic Prince of Espinoy, whom we have recently seen heading the legation of the States to France. And Richebourg was grateful to Alexander, for besides these fraternal spoils, he had received two marquises through his great patron, in addition to the highest military offices. Insolent, overbearing, truculent to all the world, to Parma he was ever docile, affectionate, watchful, obsequious. A man who knew not fatigue, nor fear, nor remorse, nor natural affection, who could patiently superintend all the details of a great military work, or manage a vast political intrigue by alternations of browbeating and bribery, or lead a forlorn hope, or murder a prisoner in cold blood, or leap into the blazing crater of what seemed a marine volcano, the Marquis of Richebourg had ever made himself most actively and unscrupulously useful to his master. Especially had he rendered invaluable services in the reduction, of the Walloon Provinces, and in the bridging of the Scheldt, the two crowning triumphs of Alexander's life. He had now passed from the scene where he had played so energetic and dazzling a part, and lay doubled round an iron cable beneath the current of the restless river.

And in this eventful night, Parma, as always, had been true to himself and to his sovereign. "We expected," said he, "that the rebels would instantly attack us on all sides after the explosion. But all remained so astonished by the unheard-of accident, that very few understood what was going on. It seemed better that I—notwithstanding the risk of letting myself be seen—should encourage the people not to run away. I did so, and remedied matters a little but not so much as that—if the enemy had then attacked us—we should not have been in the very greatest risk and peril. I did not fail to do what I am obliged to do, and always hope to do; but I say no more of what passed, or what was done by myself, because it does not become me to speak of these things."



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Notwithstanding this discomfiture, the patriots kept up heart, and were incessantly making demonstrations against Parma's works. Their proceedings against the bridge, although energetic enough to keep the Spanish commander in a state of perpetual anxiety, were never so efficient however as on the memorable occasion when the Mantuan engineer and the Dutch watchmaker had exhausted all their ingenuity. Nevertheless, the rebel barks swarmed all over the submerged territory, now threatening this post, and now that, and effecting their retreat at pleasure; for nearly the whole of Parma's little armada was stationed at the two extremities of his bridge. Many fire-ships were sent down from time to time, but Alexander had organized a systematic patrol of a few sentry-boats, armed with scythes and hooks, which rowed up and down in front of the rafts, and protected them against invasion.

Some little effect was occasionally produced, but there was on the whole more anxiety excited than damage actually inflicted. The perturbation of spirit among the Spaniards when any of these 'demon fine-ships,' as they called them, appeared bearing down upon their bridge, was excessive. It could not be forgotten, that the 'Hope' had sent into space a thousand of the best soldiers of the little army within one moment of time.

Such rapid proceedings had naturally left an uneasy impression on the minds of the survivors. The fatigue of watching was enormous. Hardly an officer or soldier among the besieging forces knew what it was to sleep. There was a perpetual exchanging of signals and beacon-fires and rockets among the patriots—not a day or night, when a concerted attack by the Antwerpers from above, and the Hollanders from below, with gun-boats and fire-ships, and floating mines, and other devil's enginry, was not expected.

"We are always upon the alert," wrote Parma, "with arms in our hands. Every one must mount guard, myself as well as the rest, almost every night, and the better part of every day."

He was quite aware that something was ever in preparation; and the nameless, almost sickening apprehension which existed among his stout-hearted veterans, was a proof that the Mantuan's genius—notwithstanding the disappointment as to the great result—had not been exercised entirely in vain. The image of the Antwerp devil-ships imprinted itself indelibly upon the Spanish mind, as of something preternatural, with which human valour could only contend at a disadvantage; and a day was not very far distant—one of the memorable days of the world's history, big with the fate of England, Spain, Holland, and all Christendom—when the sight of a half-dozen blazing vessels, and the cry of "the Antwerp fireships," was to decide the issue of a most momentous enterprise. The blow struck by the obscure Italian against Antwerp bridge, although ineffective then, was to be most sensibly felt after a few years had passed, upon a wider field.



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Meantime the uneasiness and the watchfulness in the besieging army were very exhausting. "They are never idle in the city," wrote Parma. "They are perpetually proving their obstinacy and pertinacity by their industrious genius and the machines which they devise. Every day we are expecting some new invention. On our side we endeavour to counteract their efforts by every human means in our power. Nevertheless, I confess that our merely human intellect is not competent to penetrate the designs of their diabolical genius. Certainly, most wonderful and extraordinary things have been exhibited, such as the oldest soldiers here have never before witnessed."

Moreover, Alexander saw himself growing weaker and weaker. His force had dwindled to a mere phantom of an army. His soldiers, ill-fed, half-clothed, unpaid, were fearfully overworked. He was obliged to concentrate all the troops at his disposal around Antwerp. Diversions against Ostend, operations in Friesland and Gelderland, although most desirable, had thus been rendered quite impossible.

"I have recalled my cavalry and infantry from Ostend," he wrote, "and Don Juan de Manrique has fortunately arrived in Stabroek with a thousand good German folk. The commissary-general of the cavalry has come in, too, with a good lot of the troops that had been encamped in the open country. Nevertheless, we remain wretchedly weak—quite insufficient to attempt what ought to be done. If the enemy were more in force, or if the French wished to make trouble, your Majesty would see how important it had been to provide in time against such contingencies. And although our neighbours, crestfallen, and rushing upon their own destruction, leave us in quiet, we are not without plenty of work. It would be of inestimable advantage to make diversions in Gelderland and Friesland, because, in that case, the Hollanders, seeing the enemy so near their own borders, would be obliged to withdraw their assistance from Antwerp. 'Tis pity to see how few Spaniards your Majesty has left, and how diminished is our army. Now, also, is the time to expect sickness, and this affair of Antwerp is obviously stretching out into large proportions. Unless soon reinforced, we must inevitably go to destruction. I implore your Majesty to ponder the matter well, and not to defer the remedy."

His Majesty was sure to ponder the matter well, if that had been all. Philip was good at pondering; but it was equally certain that the remedy would be deferred. Meantime Alexander and his starving but heroic little army were left to fight their battles as they could.

His complaints were incessant, most reasonable, but unavailing. With all the forces he could muster, by withdrawing from the neighbourhood of Ghent, Brussels, Vilvoorde, and from all the garrisons, every man that could be spared, he had not strength enough to guard his own posts. To attempt to win back the important forts recently captured by the rebels on the Doel, was quite out of the question. The pictures he painted of his army were indeed most dismal.



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The Spaniards were so reduced by sickness that it was pitiful to see them. The Italians were not in much better condition, nor the Germans. "As for the Walloons," said he, "they are deserting, as they always do. In truth, one of my principal dangers is that the French civil wars are now tempting my soldiers across the frontier; the country there is so much richer, and offers so much more for the plundering."

During the few weeks which immediately followed their famous descent of the 'Hope' and the 'Fortune,' there had accordingly been made a variety of less elaborate, but apparently mischievous, efforts against the bridge. On the whole, however, the object was rather to deceive and amuse the royalists, by keeping their attention fixed in that quarter, while a great attack was, in reality, preparing against the Kowenstyn. That strong barrier, as repeatedly stated, was even a more formidable obstacle than the bridge to the communication between the beleaguered city and their allies upon the outside. Its capture and demolition, even at this late period, would open the navigation to all the fleets of Zeeland.

In the undertaking of the 5th of April all had been accomplished that human ingenuity could devise; yet the triumph had been snatched away even at the very moment when it was complete. A determined and vigorous effort was soon to be made upon the Kowenstyn, in the very face of Parma; for it now seemed obvious that the true crisis was to come upon that fatal dyke. The great bulwark was three miles long. It reached from Stabroek in Brabant, near which village Mansfeld's troops were encamped, across the inundated country, up to the line of the Scheldt. Thence, along the river-dyke, and across the bridge to Kalloo and Beveren, where Parma's forces lay, was a continuous fortified road some three leagues in length; so that the two divisions of the besieging army, lying four leagues apart, were all connected by this important line.

Could the Kowenstyn be pierced, the water, now divided by that great bulwark into two vast lakes, would flow together in one continuous sea. Moreover the Scheldt, it was thought, would, in that case, return to its own channel through Brabant, deserting its present bed, and thus leaving the famous bridge high and dry. A wide sheet of navigable water would then roll between Antwerp and the Zeeland coasts, and Parma's bridge, the result of seven months' labour, would become as useless as a child's broken toy.

Alexander had thoroughly comprehended the necessity of maintaining the Kowenstyn. All that it was possible to do with the meagre forces at his disposal, he had done. He had fringed both its margins, along its whole length, with a breastwork of closely-driven stakes. He had strengthened the whole body of the dyke with timber-work and piles. Upon its river-end, just at the junction with the great Scheldt dyke, a strong fortress, called the Holy Cross, had

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been constructed, which was under the special command of Mondragon. Besides this, three other forts had been built, at intervals of about a mile, upon the dyke. The one nearest to Mondragon was placed at the Kowenstyn manor-house, and was called Saint James. This was entrusted to Camillo Bourbon del Monte, an Italian officer, who boasted the blood royal of France in his veins, and was disposed on all occasions to vindicate that proud pedigree by his deeds. The next fort was Saint George's, sometimes called the Black Sconce. It had been built by La Motte, but it was now in command of the Spanish officer, Benites. The third was entitled the Fort of the Palisades, because it had been necessary to support it by a stockade-work in the water, there being absolutely not earth enough to hold the structure. It was placed in the charge of Captain Gamboa. These little castles had been created, as it were, out of water and upon water, and under a hot fire from the enemy's forts and fleets, which gave the pioneers no repose.

"'Twas very hard work," said Parma, "our soldiers are so exposed during their labour, the rebels playing upon them perpetually from their musket-proof vessels. They fill the submerged land with their boats, skimming everywhere as they like, while we have none at all. We have been obliged to build these three forts with neither material nor space; making land enough for the foundation by bringing thither bundles of hurdles and of earth. The fatigue and anxiety are incredible. Not a man can sleep at night; not an officer nor soldier but is perpetually mounting guard. But they are animated to their hard work by seeing that I share in it, like one of themselves. We have now got the dyke into good order, so far as to be able to give them a warm reception, whenever they choose to come."

Quite at the farther or land end of the Kowenstyn, was another fort, called the Stabroek, which commanded and raked the whole dyke, and was in the neighbourhood of Mansfeld's head-quarters.

Placed as were these little citadels upon a slender, and—at brief distance—invisible thread of land, with the dark waters rolling around them far and near, they presented an insubstantial dream-like aspect, seeming rather like castles floating between air and ocean than actual fortifications—a deceptive mirage rather than reality. There was nothing imaginary, however, in the work which they were to perform.

A series of attacks, some serious, others fictitious, had been made, from time to time, upon both bridge and dyke; but Alexander was unable to inspire his soldiers with his own watchfulness. Upon the 7th of May a more determined attempt was made upon the Kowenstyn, by the fleet from Lillo. Hohenlo and Colonel Ysselstein conducted the enterprise. The sentinels at the point selected—having recently been so often threatened by an enemy, who most frequently made a rapid retreat, as to have grown



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weary and indifferent-were surprised, at dawn of day, and put to the sword. "If the truth must be told," said Parma, "the sentries were sound asleep." Five hundred Zeelanders, with a strong party of sappers and miners, fairly established themselves upon the dyke, between St. George's and Fort Palisade. The attack, although spirited at its commencement, was doomed to be unsuccessful. A co-operation, agreed upon by the fleet from Antwerp, failed through a misunderstanding. Sainte Aldegonde had stationed certain members of the munition-chamber in the cathedral tower, with orders to discharge three rockets, when they should perceive a beacon-fire which he should light in Fort Tholouse. The watchmen mistook an accidental camp-fire in the neighbourhood for the preconcerted signal, and sent up the rockets. Hohenlo understanding, accordingly, that the expedition was on the point of starting from Antwerp, hastened to perform his portion of the work, and sailed up from Lillo. He did his duty faithfully and well, and established himself upon the dyke, but found himself alone and without sufficient force to maintain his position. The Antwerp fleet never sailed. It was even whispered that the delinquency was rather intended than accidental; the Antwerpens being supposed desirous to ascertain the result of Hohenlo's attempt before coming forth to share his fate. Such was the opinion expressed by Farnese in his letters to Philip, but it seems probable that he was mistaken. Whatever the cause, however, the fact of the Zeelanders' discomfiture was certain. The St. George battery and that of the Palisade were opened at once upon them, the balls came plunging among the sappers and miners before they had time to throw up many spade-fulls of earth, and the whole party were soon dead or driven from the dyke. The survivors effected their retreat as they best could, leaving four of their ships behind them and three or four hundred men.

"Forty rebels lay dead on the dyke," said Parma, "and one hundred and fifty more, at least, were drowned. The enemy confess a much larger loss than the number I state, but I am not a friend of giving details larger than my ascertained facts; nor do I know how many were killed in the boats."

This enterprise was but a prelude, however, to the great undertaking which had now been thoroughly matured. Upon the 26th May, another and most determined attack was to be made upon the Kowenstyn, by the Antwerpens and Hollanders acting in concert. This time, it was to be hoped, there would be no misconception of signals. "It was a determination," said Parma, "so daring and desperate that there was no substantial reason why we should believe they would carry it out; but they were at last solemnly resolved to die or to effect their purpose."

Two hundred ships in all had been got ready, part of them under Hohenlo and Justinus de Nassau, to sail up from Zeeland; the others to advance from Antwerp under Sainte Aldegonde. Their destination was the Kowenstyn Dyke. Some of the vessels were laden with provisions, others with gabions, hurdles, branches, sacks of sand and of wool, and with other materials for the rapid throwing up of fortifications.



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It was two o'clock, half an hour before the chill dawn of a May morning, Sunday, the 26th of the month. The pale sight of a waning moon was faintly perceptible in the sky. Suddenly the sentinels upon the Kowenstyn—this time not asleep—descried, as they looked towards Lillo, four fiery apparitions gliding towards them across the waves. The alarm was given, and soon afterwards the Spaniards began to muster, somewhat reluctantly, upon the dyke, filled as they always were with the mysterious dread which those demon-vessels never failed to inspire.

The fire-ships floated slowly nearer, and at last struck heavily against the stockade-work. There, covered with tar, pitch, rosin, and gunpowder, they flamed, flared, and exploded, during a brief period, with much vigour, and then burned harmlessly out. One of the objects for which they had been sent—to set fire to the palisade—was not accomplished. The other was gained; for the enemy, expecting another volcanic shower of tombstones and plough-coulters, and remembering the recent fate of their comrades on the bridge, had retired shuddering into the forts. Meantime, in the glare of these vast torches, a great swarm of gunboats and other vessels, skimming across the leaden-coloured waters, was seen gradually approaching the dyke. It was the fleet of Hohenlo and Justinus de Nassau, who had been sailing and rowing since ten o'clock of the preceding night. The burning ships lighted them on their way, while it had scared the Spaniards from their posts.

The boats ran ashore in the mile-long space between forts St. George and the Palisade, and a party of Zeelanders, Admiral Haultain, governor of Walcheren, at their head, sprang upon the dyke. Meantime, however, the royalists, finding that the fire-ships had come to so innocent an end, had rallied and emerged from their forts. Haultain and his Zeelanders, by the time they had fairly mounted the dyke, found themselves in the iron embrace of several hundred Spaniards. After a brief fierce struggle, face to face, and at push of pike, the patriots reeled backward down tile bank, and took refuge in their boats. Admiral Haultain slipped as he left the shore, missed a rope's end which was thrown to him, fell into the water, and, borne down by the weight of his armour, was drowned. The enemy, pursuing them, sprang to the waist in the ooze on the edge of the dyke, and continued the contest. The boats opened a hot fire, and there was a severe skirmish for many minutes, with no certain result. It was, however, beginning to go hard with the Zeelanders, when, just at the critical moment, a cheer from the other side of the dyke was heard, and the Antwerp fleet was seen coming swiftly to the rescue. The Spaniards, taken between the two bands of assailants, were at a disadvantage, and it was impossible to prevent the landing of these fresh antagonists. The Antwerpers sprang ashore. Among the foremost was Sainte Aldegonde, poet, orator, hymn-book maker, burgomaster, lawyer, polemical divine—now armed to the teeth and cheering on his men, in the very thickest of the fight. The diversion was successful, and Sainte Aldegonde gallantly drove the Spaniards quite off the field. The whole combined force from Antwerp and Zeeland now effected their landing. Three thousand men occupied all the space between Fort George and the Palisade.

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With Sainte Aldegonde came the unlucky Koppen Loppen, and all that could be spared of the English and Scotch troops in Antwerp, under Balfour and Morgan. With Hohenlo and Justinus de Nassau came Reinier Kant, who had just succeeded Paul Buys as Advocate of Holland. Besides these came two other men, side by side, perhaps in the same boat, of whom the world was like to hear much, from that time forward, and whose names are to be most solemnly linked together, so long as Netherland history shall endure; one, a fair-faced flaxen-haired boy of eighteen, the other a square-visaged, heavy-browed man of forty—Prince Maurice and John of Olden-Barneveldt. The statesman had been foremost to urge the claim of William the Silent's son upon the stadholderate of Holland and Zeeland, and had been, as it were, the youth's political guardian. He had himself borne arms more than once before, having shouldered his matchlock under Batenburg, and marched on that officer's spirited but disastrous expedition for the relief of Haarlem. But this was the life of those Dutch rebels. Quill-driving, law-expounding, speech-making, diplomatic missions, were intermingled with very practical business in besieged towns or open fields, with Italian musketeers and Spanish pikemen. And here, too, young Maurice was taking his first solid lesson in the art of which he was one day to be so distinguished a professor. It was a sharp beginning. Upon this ribband of earth, scarce six paces in breadth, with miles of deep water on both sides—a position recently fortified by the first general of the age, and held by the famous infantry of Spain and Italy—there was likely to be no prentice-work.

To assault such a position was in truth, as Alexander had declared it to be, a most daring and desperate resolution on the part of the States. "Soldiers, citizens, and all," said Parma, "they are obstinate as dogs to try their fortune."

With wool-sacks, sand-bags, hurdles, planks, and other materials brought with them, the patriots now rapidly entrenched themselves in the position so brilliantly gained; while, without deferring for an instant the great purpose which they had come to effect, the sappers and miners fastened upon the ironbound soil of the dyke, tearing it with pick, mattock, and shovel, digging, delving, and throwing up the earth around them, busy as human beavers, instinctively engaged in a most congenial task.

But the beavers did not toil unmolested. The large and determined force of Antwerpens and English, Hollanders and Zeelanders, guarded the fortifications as they were rapidly rising, and the pioneers as they were so manfully delving; but the enemy was not idle. From Fort Saint James, next beyond Saint George, Camillo del Monte led a strong party to the rescue. There was a tremendous action, foot to foot, breast to breast, with pike and pistol, sword and dagger. Never since the beginning of the war had there been harder fighting than now upon that narrow isthmus.



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“Twas an affair of most brave obstinacy on both sides,” said Parma, who rarely used strong language. “Soldiers, citizens, and all—they were like mad bulldogs.” Hollanders, Italians, Scotchmen, Spaniards, Englishmen, fell thick and fast. The contest was about the entrenchments before they were completed, and especially around the sappers and miners, in whose picks and shovels lay the whole fate of Antwerp. Many of the dyke-breakers were digging their own graves, and rolled, one after another, into the breach which they were so obstinately creating. Upon that slender thread of land the hopes of many thousands were hanging. To tear it asunder, to roll the ocean-waves up to Antwerp, and thus to snatch the great city triumphantly from the grasp of Philip—to accomplish this, the three thousand had come forth that May morning. To prevent it, to hold firmly that great treasure entrusted to them, was the determination of the Spaniards. And so, closely pent and packed, discharging their carbines into each other’s faces, rolling, coiled together, down the slimy sides of the dyke into the black waters, struggling to and fro, while the cannon from the rebel fleet and from the royal forts mingled their roar with the sharp crack of the musketry, Catholics and patriots contended for an hour, while still, through all the confusion and uproar, the miners dug and delved.

At last the patriots were victorious. They made good their entrenchments, drove the Spaniards, after much slaughter, back to the fort of Saint George on the one side, and of the Palisade on the other, and cleared the whole space between the two points. The centre of the dyke was theirs; the great Kowenstyn, the only key by which the gates of Antwerp could be unlocked, was in the deliverers’ hands. They pursued their victory, and attacked the Palisade Fort. Gamboa, its commandant, was severely wounded; many other officers dead or dying; the outworks were in the hands of the Hollanders; the slender piles on which the fortress rested in the water were rudely shaken; the victory was almost complete.

And now there was a tremendous cheer of triumph. The beavers had done their work, the barrier was bitten through and through, the salt water rushed like a river through the ruptured dyke. A few moments later, and a Zeeland barge, freighted with provisions, floated triumphantly into the waters beyond, now no longer an inland sea. The deed was done—the victory achieved. Nothing more was necessary than to secure it, to tear the fatal barrier to fragments, to bury it, for its whole length, beneath the waves. Then, after the isthmus had been utterly submerged, when the Scheldt was rolled back into its ancient bed, when Parma’s famous bridge had become useless, when the maritime communication between Antwerp and Holland had been thoroughly established, the Spaniards would have nothing left for it but to drown like rats in their entrenchments or to abandon the siege in despair. All this was in the hands of the patriots. The Kowenstyn was theirs. The Spaniards were driven from the field, the batteries of their forts silenced. For a long period the rebels were unmolested, and felt themselves secure.

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“We remained thus some three hours,” says Captain James, an English officer who fought in the action, and described it in rough, soldierly fashion to Walsingham the same day, “thinking all things to be secure.” Yet in the very supreme moment of victory, the leaders, both of the Hollanders and of the Antwerpens, proved themselves incompetent to their position. With deep regret it must be admitted, that not only the reckless Hohenlo, but the all-accomplished Sainte Aldegonde, committed the gravest error. In the hour of danger, both had comported themselves with perfect courage and conduct. In the instant of triumph, they gave way to puerile exultation. With a celerity as censurable as it seems incredible, both these commanders sprang into the first barge which had thus floated across the dyke, in order that they might, in person, carry the news of the victory to Antwerp, and set all the bells ringing and the bonfires blazing. They took with them Ferrante Spinola, a mortally-wounded Italian officer of rank, as a trophy of their battle, and a boatload of beef and flour, as an earnest of the approaching relief.

While the conquerors were thus gone to enjoy their triumph, the conquered, though perplexed and silenced, were not yet disposed to accept their defeat. They were even ignorant that they were conquered. They had been forced to abandon the field, and the patriots had entrenched themselves upon the dyke, but neither Fort Saint George nor the Palisade had been carried, although the latter was in imminent danger.

Old Count Peter Ernest Mansfeld—a grizzled veteran, who had passed his childhood, youth, manhood, and old age, under fire—commanded at the land-end of the dyke, in the fortress of Stabroek, in which neighbourhood his whole division was stationed. Seeing how the day was going, he called a council of war. The patriots had gained a large section of the dyke. So much was certain. Could they succeed in utterly demolishing that bulwark in the course of the day? If so, how were they to be dislodged before their work was perfected? It was difficult to assault their position. Three thousand Hollanders, Antwerpens, Englishmen— “mad bulldogs all,” as Parma called them—showing their teeth very mischievously, with one hundred and sixty Zeeland vessels throwing in their broadsides from both margins of the dyke, were a formidable company to face.

“Oh for one half hour of Alexander in the field!” sighed one of the Spanish officers in council. But Alexander was more than four leagues away, and it was doubtful whether he even knew of the fatal occurrence. Yet how to send him a messenger. Who could reach him through that valley of death? Would it not be better to wait till nightfall? Under the cover of darkness something might be attempted, which in the daylight would be hopeless. There was much anxiety, and much difference of opinion had been expressed, when Camillo Capizucca, colonel of the

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Italian Legion, obtained a hearing. A man bold in words as in deeds, he vehemently denounced the pusillanimity which would wait either for Parma or for nightfall. "What difference will it make," he asked, "whether we defer our action until either darkness or the General arrives? In each case we give the enemy time enough to destroy the dyke, and thoroughly to relieve the city. That done, what good can be accomplished by our arms? Then our disheartened soldiers will either shrink from a fruitless combat or march to certain death." Having thus, very warmly but very sagaciously, defined the position in which all were placed, he proceeded to declare that he claimed, neither for himself nor for his legion, any superiority over the rest of the army. He knew not that the Italians were more to be relied upon than others in the time of danger, but this he did know, that no man in the world was so devoted as he was to the Prince of Parma. To show that devotion by waiting with folded arms behind a wall until the Prince should arrive to extricate his followers, was not in his constitution. He claimed the right to lead his Italians against the enemy at once—in the front rank, if others chose to follow; alone, if the rest preferred to wait till a better leader should arrive.

The words of the Italian colonel sent a thrill through all who heard him. Next in command under Capizucca was his camp-marshal, an officer who bore the illustrious name of Piccolomini—father of the Duke Ottavio, of whom so much was to be heard at a later day throughout the fell scenes of that portion of the eighty years' tragedy now enacting, which was to be called the Thirty Years' War of Germany. The camp-marshal warmly seconded the proposition of his colonel. Mansfeld, pleased with such enthusiasm among his officers, yielded to their wishes, which were, in truth, his own. Six companies of the Italian Legion were in his encampment while the remainder were stationed, far away, upon the bridge, under command of his son, Count Charles. Early in the morning, before the passage across the dyke had been closed the veteran condottiere, pricking his ears as he snuffed the battle from afar, had contrived to send a message to his son.

"Charles, my boy," were his words, "to-day we must either beat them or burst."

Old Peter Ernest felt that the long-expected, long-deferred assault was to be made that morning in full force, and that it was necessary for the royalists, on both bridge and dyke, to hold their own. Piccolomini now drew up three hundred of his Italians, picked veterans all, and led them in marching order to Mansfeld. That general at the same moment, received another small but unexpected reinforcement. A portion of the Spanish Legion, which had long been that of Pedro Pacchi, lay at the extreme verge of the Stabroek encampment, several miles away. Aroused by the distant cannonading, and suspecting what had occurred, Don Juan d'Aquila, the colonel in command, marched

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without a moment's delay to Mansfeld's head-quarters, at the head of all the force he could muster—about two hundred strong. With him came Cardona, Gonzales de Castro, Toralva, and other distinguished officers. As they arrived, Capizucca was just setting forth for the field. There arose a dispute for precedence between the Italians and the Spaniards. Capizucca had first demanded the privilege of leading what seemed a forlorn hope, and was unwilling to yield his claim to the new comer. On the other hand, the Spaniards were not disposed to follow where they felt entitled to lead. The quarrel was growing warm, when Aquila, seizing his Italian rival by the hand, protested that it was not a moment for friends to wrangle for precedence.

“Shoulder to shoulder,” said he, “let us go into this business, and let our blows rather fall on our enemies' heads than upon each other's.” This terminated the altercation. The Italians and Spaniards—in battle array as they were—all dropped on their knees, offered a brief prayer to the Holy Virgin, and then, in the best possible spirits, set forth along the dyke. Next to fort Stabroek—whence they issued—was the Palisade Fort, nearly a mile removed, which the patriots had nearly carried, and between which and St. George, another mile farther on, their whole force was established.

The troops under Capizucca and Aquila soon reached the Palisade, and attacked the besiegers, while the garrison, cheered by the unexpected relief, made a vigorous sortie. There was a brief sharp contest, in which many were killed on both sides; but at last the patriots fell back upon their own entrenchments, and the fort was saved. Its name was instantly changed to Fort Victory, and the royalists then prepared to charge the fortified camp of the rebels, in the centre of which the dyke-cutting operations were still in progress. At the same moment, from the opposite end of the bulwark, a cry was heard along the whole line of the dyke. From Fort Holy Cross, at the Scheldt end, the welcome intelligence was suddenly communicated—as if by a magnetic impulse—that Alexander was in the field!

It was true. Having been up half the night, as usual, keeping watch along his bridge, where he was ever expecting a fatal attack, he had retired for a few hours' rest in his camp at Beveren. Aroused at day-break by the roar of the cannon, he had hastily thrown on his armour, mounted his horse, and, at the head of two hundred pikemen, set forth for the scene of action. Detained on the bridge by a detachment of the Antwerp fleet, which had been ordered to make a diversion in that quarter, he had, after beating off their vessels with his boat-artillery, and charging Count Charles Mansfeld to heed well the brief injunction of old Peter Ernest, made all the haste he could to the Kowenstyn. Arriving at Fort Holy Cross, he learned from Mondragon how the day was going. Three thousand rebels, he learned,



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were established on the dyke, Fort Palisade was tottering, a fleet from both sides was cannonading the Spanish entrenchments, the salt water was flowing across the breach already made. His seven months' work, it seemed, had come to nought. The navigation was already open from the sea to Antwerp, the Lowenstyn was in the rebels' hands. But Alexander was not prone to premature despair. "I arrived," said he to Philip in a letter written on the same evening, "at the very nick of time." A less hopeful person might have thought that he had arrived several hours too late. Having brought with him every man that could be spared from Beveren and from the bridge, he now ordered Camillo del Monte to transport some additional pieces of artillery from Holy Cross and from Saint James to Fort Saint Georg. At the same time a sharp cannonade was to be maintained upon the rebel fleet from all the forts.

Mondragon, with a hundred musketeers and pikemen, was sent forward likewise as expeditiously as possible to Saint George. No one could be more alert. The battered veteran, hero of some of the most remarkable military adventures that history has ever recorded, fought his way on foot, in the midst of the fray, like a young ensign who had his first laurels to win. And, in truth, the day was not one for cunning manoeuvres, directed, at a distance, by a skillful tactician. It was a brisk close contest, hand to hand and eye to eye—a Homeric encounter, in which the chieftains were to prove a right to command by their personal prowess. Alexander, descending suddenly—dramatically, as it were—when the battle seemed lost—like a deity from the clouds—was to justify, by the strength of his arm, the enthusiasm which his name always awakened. Having, at a glance, taken in the whole situation, he made his brief arrangements, going from rank to rank, and disposing his troops in the most effective manner. He said but few words, but his voice had always a telling effect.

"The man who refuses, this day, to follow me," he said, "has never had regard to his own honour, nor has God's cause or the King's ever been dear to his heart."

His disheartened Spaniards and Italians—roused as by a magic trumpet—eagerly demanded to be led against the rebels. And now from each end of the dyke, the royalists were advancing toward the central position occupied by the patriots. While Capizucca and Aquila were occupied at Fort Victory, Parma was steadily cutting his way from Holy Cross to Saint George. On foot, armed with sword and shield, and in coat of mail, and marching at the head of his men along the dyke, surrounded by Bevilacqua, Bentivoglio, Manriquez, Sforza, and other officers of historic name and distinguished courage, now upon the summit of the causeway, now on its shelving banks, now breast-high in the waters, through which lay the perilous path, contending at every inch with the scattered bands of the patriots, who slowly retired to their

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entrenched camp, and with the Antwerp and Zeeland vessels, whose balls tore through the royalist ranks, the General at last reached Saint George. On the preservation of that post depended the whole fortune of the day, for Parma had already received the welcome intelligence that the Palisade—now Fort Victory— had been regained. He instantly ordered an outer breast-work of wool-sacks and sand-bags to be thrown up in front of Saint George, and planted a battery to play point-blank at the enemy's entrenchments. Here the final issue was to be made.

The patriots and Spaniards were thus all enclosed in the mile-long space between St. George and the Palisade. Upon that narrow strip of earth, scarce six paces in width, more than five thousand men met in mortal combat—a narrow arena for so many gladiators, hemmed in on both sides by the sea. The patriots had, with solemn ceremony, before starting upon their enterprise, vowed to destroy the dyke and relieve Antwerp, or to perish in the attempt. They were true to their vow. Not the ancient Batavians or Nervii had ever manifested more tenacity against the Roman legions than did their descendants against the far-famed Spanish infantry upon this fatal day. The fight on the Kowenstyn was to be long remembered in the military annals of Spain and Holland. Never, since the curtain first rose upon the great Netherland tragedy, had there been a fiercer encounter. Flinching was impossible. There was scant room for the play of pike and dagger, and, close packed as were the combatants, the dead could hardly fall to the ground. It was a mile-long series of separate mortal duels, and the oozy dyke was soon slippery with blood.

From both sides, under Capizucca and Aquila on the one band, and under Alexander on the other, the entrenchments of the patriots were at last assaulted, and as the royalists fell thick and fast beneath the breast-work which they were storming, their comrades clambered upon their bodies, and attempted, from such vantage-ground, to effect an entrance. Three times the invaders were beaten back with heavy loss, and after each repulse the attack was renewed with fresh vigour, while within the entrenchments the pioneers still plied the pick and shovel, undismayed by the uproar around them.

A fourth assault, vigorously made, was cheerfully repelled by the Antwerpens and Hollanders, clustering behind their breast-works, and looking steadily into their enemies' eyes. Captain Heraugiere—of whom more was to be heard one day—had led two hundred men into action, and now found himself at the head of only thirteen. The loss had been as severe among many other patriot companies, as well as in the Spanish ranks, and again the pikemen of Spain and Italy faltered before the iron visages and cordial blows of the Hollanders.



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This work had lasted a good hour and a half, when at last, on the fifth assault, a wild and mysterious apparition renewed the enthusiasm of the Spaniards. The figure of the dead commander of the old Spanish Legion, Don Pedro Pacchi, who had fallen a few months before at the siege of Dendermonde was seen charging in front of his regiment, clad in his well-known armour, and using the gestures which had been habitual with him in life. No satisfactory explanation was ever made of this singular delusion, but it was general throughout the ranks, and in that superstitious age was as effective as truth. The wavering Spaniards rallied once more under the guidance of their phantom leader, and again charged the breast-work of the patriots. Toralva, mounting upon the back of one of his soldiers, was first to vault into the entrenchments. At the next instant he lay desperately wounded on the ground, but was close followed by Capizucca, sustained by a determined band. The entrenchment was carried, but the furious conflict still continued. At nearly the same moment, however, several of the patriot vessels were observed to cast off their moorings, and to be drifting away from the dyke. A large number of the rest had been disabled by the hot fire, which by Alexander's judicious orders had been directed upon the fleet. The ebbing tide left no choice to the commander of the others but to retreat or to remain and fall into the enemy's hands, should he gain the day. Had they risked the dangerous alternative, it might have ensured the triumph of the whole enterprise, while their actual decision proved most disastrous in the end.

"We have conquered," cried Alexander, stretching his arm towards the receding waters. "The sea deserts the impious heretics. Strike from them now their last hope, and cut off their retreat to the departing ships." The Spaniards were not slow to perceive their advantage, while the courage of the patriots at last began to ebb with the tide. The day was lost. In the hour of transitory triumph the leaders of the expedition had turned their backs on their followers, and now, after so much heroism had been exhibited, fortune too had averted her face. The grim resistance changed to desperate panic, and a mad chase began along the blood-stained dyke. Some were slain with spear and bullet, others were hunted into the sea, many were smothered in the ooze along the edge of the embankment. The fugitives, making their way to the retreating vessels, were pursued by the Spaniards, who swam after them, with their swords in their teeth, and engaged them in mortal combat in the midst of the waves.

"And so we cut all their throats," said Parma, "the rebels on every side remaining at our mercy, and I having no doubt that my soldiers would avenge the loss of their friends."



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The English and the Scotch, under Balfour and Morgan, were the very last to abandon the position which they had held so manfully seven hours long. Honest Captain James, who fought to the last, and described the action the same night in the fewest possible words, was of opinion that the fleet had moved away only to obtain a better position. "They put off to have more room to play on the enemy," said he; "but the Hollanders and Zeelanders, seeing the enemy come on so hotly, and thinking our galleys would leave them, abandoned their string. The Scots, seeing them to retire, left their string. The enemy pursued very hotly; the Englishmen stood to repulse, and are put most to the sword. In this shameful retreat there were slain or drowned to the number of two thousand." The blunt Englishman was justly indignant that an enterprise, so nearly successful, had been ruined by the desertion of its chiefs. "We had cut the dyke in three places," said he; "but left it most shamefully for want of commandment."

Poor Koppen Loppen—whose blunders on former occasions had caused so much disaster—was now fortunate enough to expiate them by a soldier's death. Admiral Haultain had, as we have seen, been drowned at the commencement of the action. Justinus de Nassau, at its close, was more successful in his retreat to the ships. He, too, sprang into the water when the overthrow was absolute; but, alighting in some shallows, was able to conceal himself among weeds and waterlilies till he had divested himself of his armour, when he made his escape by swimming to a boat, which conveyed him to Lillo. Roelke van Deest, an officer of some note, was so horribly wounded in the face, that he was obliged to wear a mask for the remainder of his life.

Parma, overjoyed at his victory, embraced Capizucca before the whole army, with warm expressions of admiration for his conduct. Both the Italian colonel and his Spanish rival Aquila were earnestly recommended to Philip for reward and promotion. The wounded Toralva was carried to Alexander's own quarters, and placed in Alexander's own bed, where he remained till his recovery, and was then presented—a distinction which he much valued—with the armour which the Prince had worn on the day of the battle. Parma himself, so soon as the action was concluded, went with his chief officers straight from the field to the little village-church of Stabroek, where he fell upon his knees and offered up fervent thanks for his victory. He next set about repairing the ruptured dyke, damaged in many places but not hopelessly ruined, and for this purpose the bodies of the rebels, among other materials, were cast by hundreds into the ditches which their own hands had dug.

Thus ended the eight hours' fight on the Kowenstyn. "The feast lasted from seven to eight hours," said Parma, "with the most brave obstinacy on both sides that has been seen for many a long day." A thousand royalists were killed and twice as many patriots, and the issue of the conflict was most uncertain up to the very last.



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“Our loss is greater than I wish it was,” wrote Alexander to Philip: “It was a very close thing, and I have never been more anxious in my life as to the result for your Majesty’s service. The whole fate of the battle was hanging all the time by a thread.” More than ever were reinforcements necessary, and it was only by a miracle that the victory had at last been gained with such slender resources. “’Tis a large, long, laborious, expensive, and most perilous war,” said Parma, when urging the claims of Capizucca and Aquila, “for we have to fight every minute; and there are no castles and other rewards, so that if soldiers are not to have promotion, they will lose their spirit.” Thirty-two of the rebel vessels grounded, and fell into the hands of the Spaniards, who took from them many excellent pieces of artillery. The result was most conclusive and most disheartening for the patriots.

Meantime—as we have seen—Hohenlo and Sainte Aldegonde had reached Antwerp in breathless haste to announce their triumph. They had been met on the quay by groups of excited citizens, who eagerly questioned the two generals arriving thus covered with laurels from the field of battle, and drank with delight all the details of the victory. The poor dying Spinola was exhibited in triumph, the boat-load of breadstuffs received with satisfaction, and vast preparations were made to receive, on wharves and in storehouses, the plentiful supplies about to arrive. Beacons and bonfires were lighted, the bells from all the steeples rang their merriest peals, cannon thundered in triumph not only in Antwerp itself, but subsequently at Amsterdam and other more distant cities. In due time a magnificent banquet was spread in the town-house to greet the conquering Hohenlo. Immense gratification was expressed by those of the reformed religion; dire threats were uttered against the Catholics. Some were for hanging them all out of hand, others for throwing them into the Scheldt; the most moderate proposed packing them all out of town so soon as the siege should be raised—an event which could not now be delayed many days longer.

Hohenlo, placed on high at the head of the banquet-table, assumed the very god of war. Beside and near him sat the loveliest dames of Antwerp, rewarding his bravery with their brightest smiles. The Count drained huge goblets to their health, to the success of the patriots, and to the confusion of the royalists, while, as he still drank and feasted, the trumpet, kettle-drum, and cymbal, and merry peal of bell without, did honour to his triumph. So gay and gallant was the victor, that he announced another banquet on the following day, still further to celebrate the happy release of Antwerp, and invited the fair ladies around him again to grace the board. It is recorded that the gentlewoman next him responded with a sigh, that, if her presentiments were just, the morrow would scarcely be so joyful as the present day had been, and that she doubted whether the triumph were not premature.



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Hardly had she spoken when sinister sounds were heard in the streets. The first few stragglers, survivors of the deadly fight, had arrived with the fatal news that all was lost, the dyke regained, the Spaniards victorious, the whole band of patriots cut to pieces. A few frightfully-wounded and dying sufferers were brought into the banqueting-hall. Hohenlo sprang from the feast—interrupted in so ghastly a manner—pursued by shouts and hisses. Howls of execration, saluted him in the streets, and he was obliged to conceal himself for a time, to escape the fury of the populace.

On the other hand, Parma was, not unnaturally, overjoyed at the successful issue to the combat, and expressed himself on the subject in language of (for him) unusual exultation. “To-day, Sunday, 26th of June,” said he, in a letter to Philip, despatched by special courier on the very same night, “the Lord has been pleased to grant to your Majesty a great and most signal victory. In this conjuncture of so great importance it may be easily conceived that the best results that can be desired will be obtained if your Majesty is now ready to do what is needful. I congratulate your Majesty very many times on this occasion, and I desire to render infinite thanks to Divine Providence.”

He afterwards proceeded, in a rapid and hurried manner, to give his Majesty the outlines of the battle, mentioning, with great encomium, Capizucca and Aquila, Mondragon and Vasto, with many other officers, and recommending them for reward and promotion; praising, in short, heartily and earnestly, all who had contributed to the victory, except himself, to whose personal exertions it was chiefly due. “As for good odd Mansfeld,” said he, “he bore himself like the man he is, and he deserves that your Majesty should send him a particular mark of your royal approbation, writing to him yourself pleasantly in Spanish, which is that which will be most highly esteemed by him.” Alexander hinted also that Philip would do well to bestow upon Mansfeld the countship of Biart, as a reward for his long years of faithful service!

This action on the Kowenstyn terminated the effective resistance of Antwerp. A few days before, the monster-vessel, in the construction of which so much time and money had been consumed, had at last been set afloat. She had been called the War’s End, and, so far as Antwerp was concerned, the fates that presided over her birth seemed to have been paltering in a double sense when the ominous name was conferred. She was larger than anything previously known in naval architecture; she had four masts and three helms. Her bulwarks were ten feet thick; her tops were musket-proof. She had twenty guns of largest size, besides many other pieces of artillery of lesser calibre, the lower tier of which was almost at the water’s level. She was to carry one thousand men, and she was so supported on corks and barrels as to be sure to float under any circumstances. Thus she was a great swimming fortress which could not be sunk, and was impervious to shot. Unluckily, however, in spite of her four masts and three helms, she would neither sail nor steer, and she proved but a great, unmanageable and very ridiculous tub, fully justifying all the sarcasms that had been launched upon her during the period of her construction, which had been almost as long as the siege itself.

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The Spaniards called her the Bugaboo—a monster to scare children withal. The patriots christened her the Elephant, the Antwerp Folly, the Lost Penny, with many similar appellations. A small army might have been maintained for a month, they said, on the money she had cost, or the whole city kept in bread for three months. At last, late in May, a few days before the battle of the Kowenstyn, she set forth from Antwerp, across the submerged land, upon her expedition to sweep all the Spanish forts out of existence, and to bring the war to its end. She came to her own end very briefly, for, after drifting helplessly about for an hour, she stuck fast in the sand in the neighbourhood of Ordam, while the crew and soldiers made their escape, and came back to the city to share in the ridicule which, from first to last, had attached itself to the monster-ship.

Two days after the Kowenstyn affair, Alexander sent an expedition under Count Charles Mansfeld to take possession of the great Bugaboo. The boat, in which were Count Charles, Count AreMBERG, his brother de Barbancon, and other noble volunteers, met with an accident: a keg of gun powder accidentally exploding, blowing AreMBERG into the water, whence he escaped unharmed by swimming, and frightfully damaging Mansfeld in the face. This indirect mischief—the only injury ever inflicted by the War's End upon the enemy—did not prevent the rest of the party in the boats from taking possession of the ship, and bringing her in triumph to the Prince of Parma. After being thoroughly examined and heartily laughed at by the Spaniards, she was broken up—her cannon, munitions, and other valuable materials, being taken from her—and then there was an end of the War's End.

This useless expenditure—against the judgment and entreaties of many leading personages—was but a type of the difficulties with which Sainte Aldegonde had been obliged to contend from the first day of the siege to the last. Every one in the city had felt himself called on to express an opinion as to the proper measures for defence. Diversity of humours, popular license, anarchy, did not constitute the best government for a city beleaguered by Alexander Farnese. We have seen the deadly injury inflicted upon the cause at the outset by the brutality of the butchers, and the manful struggle which Sainte Aldegonde had maintained against their cupidity and that of their friends. He had dealt with the thousand difficulties which rose up around him from day to day, but his best intentions were perpetually misconstrued, his most strenuous exertions steadily foiled. It was a city where there was much love of money, and where commerce—always timid by nature, particularly when controlled by alien residents—was often the cause of almost abject cowardice.



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From time to time there had been threatening demonstrations made against the burgomaster, who, by protracting the resistance of Antwerp, was bringing about the absolute destruction of a worldwide trade, and the downfall of the most opulent capital in Christendom. There were also many popular riots—very easily inflamed by the Catholic portion of the inhabitants—for bread. “Bread, bread, or peace!” was hoarsely shouted by ill-looking mischievous crowds, that dogged the steps and besieged the doors of Sainte Aldegonde; but the burgomaster had done his best by eloquence of tongue and personal courage, both against mobs and against the enemy, to inspire the mass of his fellow-citizens with his own generous spirit. He had relied for a long time on the negotiation with France, and it would be difficult to exaggerate the disastrous effects produced by the treachery of the Valois court. The historian Le Petit, a resident of Antwerp at the time of the siege, had been despatched on secret mission to Paris, and had communicated to the States’ deputies Sainte Aldegonde’s earnest adjurations that they should obtain, if possible, before it should be too late, an auxiliary force and a pecuniary subsidy. An immediate assistance, even if slight, might be sufficient to prevent Antwerp and its sister cities from falling into the hands of the enemy. On that messenger’s return, the burgomaster, much encouraged by his report, had made many eloquent speeches in the senate, and for a long time sustained the sinking spirits of the citizens.

The irritating termination to the triumph actually achieved against the bridge, and the tragical result to the great enterprise against the Kowenstyn, had now thoroughly broken the heart of Antwerp. For the last catastrophe Sainte Aldegonde himself was highly censurable, although the chief portion of the blame rested on the head of Hohenlo. Nevertheless the States of Holland were yet true to the cause of the Union and of liberty. Notwithstanding their heavy expenditures, and their own loss of men, they urged warmly and earnestly the continuance of the resistance, and promised, within at latest three months’ time, to raise an army of twelve thousand foot and seven thousand horse, with which they pledged themselves to relieve the city, or to perish in the endeavour. At the same time, the legation, which had been sent to England to offer the sovereignty to Queen Elizabeth, sent encouraging despatches to Antwerp, assuring the authorities that arrangements for an auxiliary force had been effected; while Elizabeth herself wrote earnestly upon the subject with her own hand.

“I am informed,” said that Princess, “that through the closing of the Scheldt you are likely to enter into a treaty with the Prince of Parma, the issue of which is very much to be doubted, so far as the maintenance of your privileges is concerned. Remembering the warm friendship which has ever existed between this crown and the house of Burgundy, in the realms of which you are an important member, and considering that my subjects engaged in commerce have always met with more privilege and comity in the Netherlands than in any other country, I have resolved to send you at once, assistance, comfort, and aid. The details of the plan will be stated by your envoys; but be assured that by me you will never be forsaken or neglected.”



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The negotiations with Queen Elizabeth—most important for the Netherlands, for England, and for the destinies of Europe—which succeeded the futile diplomatic transactions with France, will be laid before the reader in a subsequent chapter. It is proper that they should be massed by themselves, so that the eye can comprehend at a single glance their whole progress and aspect, as revealed both by public and official, and by secret and hitherto unpublished records. Meantime, so far as regards Antwerp, those negotiations had been too deliberately conducted for the hasty and impatient temper of the citizens.

The spirit of the commercial metropolis, long flagging, seemed at last broken. Despair was taking possession of all hearts. The common people did nothing but complain, the magistrates did nothing but wrangle. In the broad council the debates and dissensions were discouraging and endless. Six of the eight militia-colonels were for holding out at all hazards, while a majority of the eighty captains were for capitulation. The populace was tumultuous and threatening, demanding peace and bread at any price. Holland sent promises in abundance, and Holland was sincere; but there had been much disappointment, and there was now infinite bitterness. It seemed obvious that a crisis was fast approaching, and— unless immediate aid should come from Holland or from England—that a surrender was inevitable. La None, after five years' imprisonment, had at last been exchanged against Count Philip Egmont. That noble, chief of an ancient house, cousin of the Queen of France, was mortified at being ransomed against a simple Huguenot gentleman—even though that gentleman was the illustrious “iron-armed” La Noue—but he preferred to sacrifice his dignity for the sake of his liberty. He was still more annoyed that one hundred thousand crowns as security were exacted from La Noue—for which the King of Navarre became bondsman—that he would never again bear arms in the Netherlands except in obedience to the French monarch, while no such pledges were required of himself. La None visited the Prince of Parma at Antwerp, to take leave, and was received with the courtesy due to his high character and great distinction. Alexander took pleasure in showing him all his fortifications, and explaining to him the whole system of the siege, and La Noue was filled with honest amazement. He declared afterwards that the works were superb and impregnable; and that if he had been on the outside at the head of twelve thousand troops, he should have felt obliged to renounce the idea of relieving the city. “Antwerp cannot escape you,” confessed the veteran Huguenot, “but must soon fall into your hands. And when you enter, I would counsel you to hang up your sword at its gate, and let its capture be the crowning trophy in your list of victories.”

“You are right,” answered Parma, “and many of my friends have given me the same advice; but how am I to retire, engaged as I am for life in the service of my King?”



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Such was the opinion of La None, a man whose love for the reformed religion and for civil liberty can be as little doubted as his competency to form an opinion upon great military subjects. As little could he be suspected just coming as he did from an infamous prison, whence he had been at one time invited by Philip *ii.* to emerge, on condition of allowing his eyes to be put out—of any partiality for that monarch or his representative.

Moreover, although the States of Holland and the English government were earnestly desirous of relieving the city, and were encouraging the patriots with well-founded promises, the Zeeland authorities were lukewarm. The officers of the Zeeland navy, from which so much was expected, were at last discouraged. They drew up, signed, and delivered to Admiral Justinus de Nassau, a formal opinion to the effect that the Scheldt had now so many dry and dangerous places, and that the tranquil summer-nights—so different from those long, stormy ones of winter—were so short as to allow of no attempt by water likely to be successful to relieve the city.

Here certainly was much to discourage, and Sainte Aldegonde was at length discouraged. He felt that the last hope of saving Antwerp was gone, and with it all possibility of maintaining the existence of a United Netherland commonwealth. The Walloon Provinces were lost already; Ghent, Brussels, Mechlin, had also capitulated, and, with the fall of Antwerp, Flanders and Brabant must fall. There would be no barrier left even to save Holland itself. Despair entered the heart of the burgomaster, and he listened too soon to its treacherous voice. Yet while he thought a free national state no longer a possibility, he imagined it practicable to secure religious liberty by negotiation with Philip *ii.* He abandoned with a sigh one of the two great objects for which he had struggled side by side with Orange for twenty years, but he thought it possible to secure the other. His purpose was now to obtain a favourable capitulation for Antwerp, and at the same time to bring about the submission of Holland, Zeeland, and the other United Provinces, to the King of Spain. Here certainly was a great change of face on the part of one so conspicuous, and hitherto so consistent, in the ranks of Netherland patriots, and it is therefore necessary, in order thoroughly to estimate both the man and the crisis, to follow carefully his steps through the secret path of negotiation into which he now entered, and in which the Antwerp drama was to find its conclusion. In these transactions, the chief actors are, on the one side, the Prince of Parma, as representative of absolutism and the Papacy; on the other, Sainte Aldegonde, who had passed his life as the champion of the Reformation.

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No doubt the pressure upon the burgomaster was very great. Tumults were of daily occurrence. Crowds of rioters beset his door with cries of denunciations and demands for bread. A large and turbulent mob upon one occasion took possession of the horse-market, and treated him with personal indignity and violence, when he undertook to disperse them. On the other hand, Parma had been holding out hopes of pardon with more reasonable conditions than could well be expected, and had, with a good deal of art, taken advantage of several trivial circumstances to inspire the burghers with confidence in his good-will. Thus, an infirm old lady in the city happened to imagine herself so dependent upon asses milk as to have sent her purveyor out of the city, at the peril of his life, to procure a supply from the neighbourhood. The young man was captured, brought to Alexander, from whose hands he very naturally expected the punishment of a spy. The prince, however, presented him, not only with his liberty, but with a she-ass; and loaded the animal with partridges and capons, as a present for the invalid. The magistrates, hearing of the incident, and not choosing to be outdone in courtesy, sent back a waggon-load of old wine and remarkable confectionary as an offering to Alexander, and with this interchange of dainties led the way to the amenities of diplomacy.

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Courage and semblance of cheerfulness, with despair in his heart
Demanding peace and bread at any price
Not a friend of giving details larger than my ascertained facts

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