

# **History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1585e-86a eBook**

## **History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1585e-86a by John Lothrop Motley**

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## Title: History of the United Netherlands, 1585-86

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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 44

History United Netherlands, Volume 44, 1585-1586

*Chapter VII., Part 1.*

The Earl of Leicester—His Triumphal Entrance into Holland—English Spies about him—Importance of Holland to England—Spanish Schemes for invading England—Letter of the Grand Commander—Perilous Position of England—True Nature of the Contest—wealth and Strength of the Provinces—Power of the Dutch and English People—Affection of the Hollanders for the Queen—Secret Purposes of Leicester—Wretched condition of English Troops—The Nassaus and Hohenlo—The Earl's Opinion of them—Clerk and Killigrew—Interview with the States Government General offered to the Earl—Discussions on the Subject—The Earl accepts the Office—His Ambition and Mistakes—His Installation at the Hague—Intimations of the Queen's Displeasure—Deprecatory Letters of Leicester—Davison's Mission to England—Queen's Anger and Jealousy—Her angry Letters to the Earl and the States—Arrival of Davison—Stormy Interview with



the Queen—The second one is calmer—Queen's Wrath somewhat mitigated—Mission of Heneago to the States—Shirley sent to England by the Earl—His Interview with Elizabeth

At last the Earl of Leicester came. Embarking at Harwich, with a fleet of fifty ships, and attended "by the flower and chief gallants of England"—the Lords Sheffield, Willoughby, North, Burroughs, Sir Gervase Clifton, Sir William Russell, Sir Robert Sidney, and others among the number—the new lieutenant-general of the English forces in the Netherlands arrived on the 19th December, 1585, at Flushing.

His nephew, Sir Philip Sidney, and Count Maurice of Nassau, with a body of troops and a great procession of civil functionaries; were in readiness to receive him, and to escort him to the lodgings prepared for him.



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Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, was then fifty-four years of age. There are few personages in English history whose adventures, real or fictitious, have been made more familiar to the world than his have been, or whose individuality has been presented in more picturesque fashion, by chronicle, tragedy, or romance. Born in the same day of the month and hour of the day with the Queen, but two years before her birth, the supposed synastry of their destinies might partly account, in that age of astrological superstition, for the influence which he perpetually exerted. They had, moreover, been fellow-prisoners together, in the commencement of the reign of Mary, and it is possible that he may have been the medium through which the indulgent expressions of Philip II. were conveyed to the Princess Elizabeth.

His grandfather, John Dudley, that "caterpillar of the commonwealth," who lost his head in the first year of Henry VIII. as a reward for the grist which he brought to the mill of Henry VII.; his father, the mighty Duke of Northumberland, who rose out of the wreck of an obscure and ruined family to almost regal power, only to perish, like his predecessor, upon the scaffold, had bequeathed him nothing save rapacity, ambition, and the genius to succeed. But Elizabeth seemed to ascend the throne only to bestow gifts upon her favourite. Baronies and earldoms, stars and garters, manors and monopolies, castles and forests, church livings and college chancellorships, advowsons and sinecures, emoluments and dignities, the most copious and the most exalted, were conferred upon him in breathless succession. Wine, oil, currants, velvets, ecclesiastical benefices, university headships, licences to preach, to teach, to ride, to sail, to pick and to steal, all brought "grist to his mill." His grandfather, "the horse leach and shearer," never filled his coffers more rapidly than did Lord Robert, the fortunate courtier. Of his early wedlock with the ill-starred Amy Robsart, of his nuptial projects with the Queen, of his subsequent marriages and mock-marriages with Douglas Sheffield and Lettice of Essex, of his plottings, poisonings, imaginary or otherwise, of his countless intrigues, amatory and political—of that luxuriant, creeping, flaunting, all-pervading existence which struck its fibres into the mould, and coiled itself through the whole fabric, of Elizabeth's life and reign—of all this the world has long known too much to render a repetition needful here. The inmost nature and the secret deeds of a man placed so high by wealth and station, can be seen but darkly through the glass of contemporary record. There was no tribunal to sit upon his guilt. A grandee could be judged only when no longer a favourite, and the infatuation of Elizabeth for Leicester terminated only with his life. He stood now upon the soil of the Netherlands in the character of a "Messiah," yet he has been charged with crimes sufficient to send twenty humbler malefactors to the gibbet. "I think," said a most malignant arraigner of the man, in a published pamphlet, "that the Earl of Leicester hath more blood lying upon his head at this day, crying for vengeance, than ever had private man before, were he never so wicked."



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Certainly the mass of misdemeanours and infamies hurled at the head of the favourite by that “green-coated Jesuit,” father Parsons, under the title of ‘Leycester’s Commonwealth,’ were never accepted as literal verities; yet the value of the precept, to calumniate boldly, with the certainty that much of the calumny would last for ever, was never better illustrated than in the case of Robert Dudley. Besides the lesser delinquencies of filling his purse by the sale of honours and dignities, by violent ejectments from land, fraudulent titles, rapacious enclosures of commons, by taking bribes for matters of justice, grace, and supplication to the royal authority, he was accused of forging various letters to the Queen, often to ruin his political adversaries, and of plottings to entrap them into conspiracies, playing first the comrade and then the informer. The list of his murders and attempts to murder was almost endless. “His lordship hath a special fortune,” saith the Jesuit, “that when he desireth any woman’s favour, whatsoever person standeth in his way hath the luck to die quickly.” He was said to have poisoned Alice Drayton, Lady Lennox, Lord Sussex, Sir Nicholas Throgmorton, Lord Sheffield, whose widow he married and then poisoned, Lord Essex, whose widow he also married, and intended to poison, but who was said to have subsequently poisoned him—besides murders or schemes for murder of various other individuals, both French and English. “He was a rare artist in poison,” said Sir Robert Naunton, and certainly not Caesar Borgia, nor his father or sister, was more accomplished in that difficult profession than was Dudley, if half the charges against him could be believed. Fortunately for his fame, many of them were proved to be false. Sir Henry Sidney, lord deputy of Ireland, at the time of the death of Lord Essex, having caused a diligent inquiry to be made into that dark affair, wrote to the council that it was usual for the Earl to fall into a bloody flux when disturbed in his mind, and that his body when opened showed no signs of poison. It is true that Sir Henry, although an honourable man, was Leicester’s brother-in-law, and that perhaps an autopsy was not conducted at that day in Ireland on very scientific principles.

His participation in the strange death of his first wife was a matter of current belief among his contemporaries. “He is infamed by the death of his wife,” said Burghley, and the tale has since become so interwoven with classic and legendary fiction, as well as with more authentic history, that the phantom of the murdered Amy Robsart is sure to arise at every mention of the Earl’s name. Yet a coroner’s inquest—as appears from his own secret correspondence with his relative and agent at Cumnor —was immediately and persistently demanded by Dudley. A jury was impannelled—every man of them a stranger to him, and some of them enemies. Antony Forster, Appleyard, and Arthur Robsart, brother-in-law and



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brother of the lady, were present, according to Dudley's special request; "and if more of her friends could have been sent," said he, "I would have sent them;" but with all their minuteness of inquiry, "they could find," wrote Blount, "no presumptions of evil," although he expressed a suspicion that "some of the jurymen were sorry that they could not." That the unfortunate lady was killed by a fall down stairs was all that could be made of it by a coroner's inquest, rather hostile than otherwise, and urged to rigorous investigation by the supposed culprit himself. Nevertheless, the calumny has endured for three centuries, and is likely to survive as many more.

Whatever crimes Dudley may have committed in the course of his career, there is no doubt whatever that he was the most abused man in Europe. He had been deeply wounded by the Jesuit's artful publication, in which all the misdeeds with which he was falsely or justly charged were drawn up in awful array, in a form half colloquial, half judicial. "You had better give some contentment to my Lord Leicester," wrote the French envoy from London to his government, "on account of the bitter feelings excited in him by these villainous books lately written against him."

The Earl himself ascribed these calumnies to the Jesuits, to the Guise faction, and particularly to—the Queen of Scots. He was said, in consequence, to have vowed an eternal hatred to that most unfortunate and most intriguing Princess. "Leicester has lately told a friend," wrote Charles Paget, "that he will persecute you to the uttermost, for that he supposeth your Majesty to be privy to the setting forth of the book against him." Nevertheless, calumniated or innocent he was at least triumphant over calumny. Nothing could shake his hold upon Elizabeth's affections. The Queen scorned but resented the malignant attacks upon the reputation of her favourite. She declared "before God and in her conscience, that she knew the libels against him to be most scandalous, and such as none but an incarnate devil himself could dream to be true." His power, founded not upon genius nor virtue, but upon woman's caprice, shone serenely above the gulf where there had been so many shipwrecks. "I am now passing into another world," said Sussex, upon his death-bed, to his friends, "and I must leave you to your fortunes; but beware of the gipsy, or he will be too hard for you. You know not the beast so well as I do."

The "gipsy," as he had been called from his dark complexion, had been renowned in youth for the beauty of his person, being "tall and singularly well-featured, of a sweet aspect, but high foreheaded, which was of no discommendation," according to Naunton. The Queen, who had the passion of her father for tall and proper men, was easier won by externals, from her youth even to the days of her dotage, than befitted so very sagacious a personage. Chamberlains, squires of the body, carvers, cup-bearers,

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gentlemen-ushers, porters, could obtain neither place nor favour at court, unless distinguished for stature, strength, or extraordinary activity. To lose a tooth had been known to cause the loss of a place, and the excellent constitution of leg which helped Sir Christopher Hatton into the chancellorship, was not more remarkable perhaps than the success of similar endowments in other contemporaries. Leicester, although stately and imposing, had passed his summer solstice. A big bulky man, with a long red face, a bald head, a defiant somewhat sinister eye, a high nose, and a little torrent of foam-white curly beard, he was still magnificent in costume. Rustling in satin and feathers, with jewels in his ears, and his velvet toque stuck as airily as ever upon the side of his head, he amazed the honest Hollanders, who had been used to less gorgeous chieftains.

“Every body is wondering at the great magnificence and splendour of his clothes,” said the plain chronicler of Utrecht. For, not much more than a year before, Fulke Greville had met at Delft a man whose external adornments were simpler; a somewhat slip-shod personage, whom he thus pourtrayed: “His uppermost garment was a gown,” said the euphuistic Fulke, “yet such as, I confidently affirm, a mean-born student of our Inns of Court would not have been well disposed to walk the streets in. Unbuttoned his doublet was, and of like precious matter and form to the other. His waistcoat, which showed itself under it, not unlike the best sort of those woollen knit ones which our ordinary barge-watermen row us in. His company about him, the burgesses of that beerbrewing town. No external sign of degree could have discovered the inequality of his worth or estate from that multitude. Nevertheless, upon conversing with him, there was an outward passage of inward greatness.”

Of a certainty there must have been an outward passage of inward greatness about him; for the individual in unbuttoned doublet and bargeman’s waistcoat, was no other than William the Silent. A different kind of leader had now descended among those rebels, yet it would be a great mistake to deny the capacity or vigorous intentions of the magnificent Earl, who certainly was like to find himself in a more difficult and responsible situation than any he had yet occupied.

And now began a triumphal progress through the land, with a series of mighty banquets and festivities, in which no man could play a better part than Leicester. From Flushing he came to Middelburg, where, upon Christmas eve (according to the new reckoning), there was an entertainment, every dish of which has been duly chronicled. Pigs served on their feet, pheasants in their feathers, and baked swans with their necks thrust through gigantic pie-crust; crystal castles of confectionery with silver streams flowing at their base, and fair virgins leaning from the battlements, looking for their new English champion, “wine in abundance, variety of all sorts, and wonderful



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welcomes “—such was the bill of fare. The next day the Lieutenant-General returned the compliment to the magistrates of Middelburg with a tremendous feast. Then came an interlude of unexpected famine; for as the Earl sailed with his suite in a fleet of two hundred vessels for Dort—a voyage of not many hours’ usual duration—there descended a mighty frozen fog upon the waters, and they lay five whole days and nights in their ships, almost starved with hunger and cold—offering in vain a “pound of silver for a pound of bread.” Emerging at last from this dismal predicament, he landed at Dort, and so went to Rotterdam and Delft, everywhere making his way through lines of musketeers and civic functionaries, amid roaring cannon, pealing bells, burning cressets, blazing tar-barrels, fiery winged dragons, wreaths of flowers, and Latin orations.

The farther he went the braver seemed the country, and the better beloved his Lordship. Nothing was left undone, in the language of ancient chronicle, to fill the bellies and the heads of the whole company. At the close of the year he came to the Hague, where the festivities were unusually magnificent. A fleet of barges was sent to escort him. Peter, James, and John, met him upon the shore, while the Saviour appeared walking upon the waves, and ordered his disciples to cast their nets, and to present the fish to his Excellency. Farther on, he was confronted by Mars and Bellona, who recited Latin odes in his honour. Seven beautiful damsels upon a stage, representing the United States, offered him golden keys; seven others equally beautiful, embodying the seven sciences, presented him with garlands, while an enthusiastic barber adorned his shop with seven score of copper basins, with a wag-light in each, together with a rose, and a Latin posy in praise of Queen Elizabeth. Then there were tiltings in the water between champions mounted upon whales, and other monsters of the deep—representatives of siege, famine, pestilence, and murder—the whole interspersed with fireworks, poetry, charades, and Matthias, nor Anjou, nor King Philip, nor the Emperor Charles, in their triumphal progresses, had been received with more spontaneous or more magnificent demonstrations. Never had the living pictures been more startling, the allegories more incomprehensible, the banquets more elaborate, the orations more tedious. Beside himself with rapture, Leicester almost assumed the God. In Delft, a city which he described as “another London almost for beauty and fairness,” he is said so far to have forgotten himself as to declare that his family had—in the person of Lady Jane Grey, his father, and brother—been unjustly deprived of the crown of England; an indiscretion which caused a shudder in all who heard him. It was also very dangerous for the Lieutenant-General to exceed the bounds of becoming modesty at that momentous epoch. His power, as we shall soon have occasion to observe, was anomalous, and he was surrounded by



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enemies. He was not only to grapple with a rapidly developing opposition in the States, but he was surrounded with masked enemies, whom he had brought with him from England. Every act and word of his were liable to closest scrutiny, and likely to be turned against him. For it was most characteristic of that intriguing age, that even the astute Walsingham, who had an eye and an ear at every key-hole in Europe, was himself under closest domestic inspection. There was one Poley, a trusted servant of Lady Sidney, then living in the house of her father Walsingham, during Sir Philip's absence, who was in close communication with Lord Montjoy's brother, Blount, then high in favour of Queen Elizabeth—"whose grandmother she might be for his age and hers"—and with another brother Christopher Blount, at that moment in confidential attendance upon Lord Leicester in Holland. Now Poley, and both the Blounts, were, in reality, Papists, and in intimate correspondence with the agents of the Queen of Scots, both at home and abroad, although "forced to fawn upon Leicester, to see if they might thereby live quiet." They had a secret "alphabet," or cipher, among them, and protested warmly, that they "honoured the ground whereon Queen Mary trod better than Leicester with all his generation; and that they felt bound to serve her who was the only saint living on the earth."

It may be well understood then that the Earl's position was a slippery one, and that great assumption might be unsafe. "He taketh the matter upon him," wrote Morgan to the Queen of Scots, "as though he were an absolute king; but he hath many personages about him of good place out of England, the best number whereof desire nothing more than his confusion. Some of them be gone with him to avoid the persecution for religion in England. My poor advice and labour shall not be wanting to give Leicester all dishonour, which will fall upon him in the end with shame enough; though for the present he be very strong." Many of these personages of good place, and enjoying "charge and credit" with the Earl had very serious plans in their heads. Some of them meant "for the service of God, and the advantage of the King of Spain, to further the delivery of some notable towns in Holland and Zeeland to the said King and his ministers," and we are like to hear of these individuals again.

Meantime, the Earl of Leicester was at the Hague. Why was he there? What was his work? Why had Elizabeth done such violence to her affection as to part with her favourite-in-chief; and so far overcome her thrift, as to furnish forth, rather meagrely to be sure, that little army of Englishmen? Why had the flower of England's chivalry set foot upon that dark and bloody ground where there seemed so much disaster to encounter, and so little glory to reap? Why had England thrown herself so heroically into the breach, just as the last bulwarks were falling which protected Holland from the overwhelming



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onslaught of Spain? It was because Holland was the threshold of England; because the two countries were one by danger and by destiny; because the naval expedition from Spain against England was already secretly preparing; because the deposed tyrant of Spain intended the Provinces, when again subjugated, as a steppingstone to the conquest of England; because the naval and military forces of Holland—her numerous ships, her hardy mariners, her vast wealth, her commodious sea-ports, close to the English coast—if made Spanish property would render Philip invincible by sea and land; and because the downfall of Holland and of Protestantism would be death to Elizabeth, and annihilation to England.

There was little doubt on the subject in the minds of those engaged in this expedition. All felt most keenly the importance of the game, in which the Queen was staking her crown, and England its national existence.

“I pray God,” said Wilford, an officer much in Walsingham’s confidence, “that I live not to see this enterprise quail, and with it the utter subversion of religion throughout all Christendom. It may be I may be judged to be afraid of my own shadow. God grant it be so. But if her Majesty had not taken the helm in hand, and my Lord of Leicester sent over, this country had been gone ere this. . . . This war doth defend England. Who is he that will refuse to spend his life and living in it? If her Majesty consume twenty thousand men in the cause, the experimented men that will remain will double that strength to the realm.”

This same Wilford commanded a company in Ostend, and was employed by Leicester in examining the defences of that important place. He often sent information to the Secretary, “troubling him with the rude stile of a poor soldier, being driven to scribble in haste.” He reiterated, in more than one letter, the opinion, that twenty thousand men consumed in the war would be a saving in the end, and his own determination—although he had intended retiring from the military profession—to spend not only his life in the cause, but also the poor living that God had given him. “Her Highness hath now entered into it,” he said; “the fire is kindled; whosoever suffers it to go out, it will grow dangerous to that side. The whole state of religion is in question, and the realm of England also, if this action quail. God grant we never live to see that doleful day. Her Majesty hath such footing now in these parts, as I judge it impossible for the King to weary her out, if every man will put to the work his helping hand, whereby it may be lustily followed, and the war not suffered to cool. The freehold of England will be worth but little, if this action quail, and therefore I wish no subject to spare his purse towards it.”



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Spain moved slowly. Philip the Prudent was not sudden or rash, but his whole life had proved, and was to prove, him inflexible in his purposes, and patient in his attempts to carry them into effect, even when the purposes had become chimerical, and the execution impossible. Before the fall of Antwerp he had matured his scheme for the invasion of England, in most of its details—a necessary part of which was of course the reduction of Holland and Zeeland. “Surely no danger nor fear of any attempt can grow to England,” wrote Wilford, “so long as we can hold this country good.” But never was honest soldier more mistaken than he, when he added:—“The Papists will make her Highness afraid of a great fleet now preparing in Spain. We hear it also, but it is only a scare-crow to cool the enterprise here.”

It was no scare-crow. On the very day on which Wilford was thus writing to Walsingham, Philip the Second was writing to Alexander Farnese. “The English,” he said, “with their troops having gained a footing in the islands (Holland and Zeeland) give me much anxiety. The English Catholics are imploring me with much importunity to relieve them from the persecution they are suffering. When you sent me a plan, with the coasts, soundings, quicksands, and ports of England, you said that the enterprise of invading that country should be deferred till we had reduced the isles; that, having them, we could much more conveniently attack England; or that at least we should wait till we had got Antwerp. As the city is now taken, I want your advice now about the invasion of England. To cut the root of the evils constantly growing up there, both for God’s service and mine, is desirable. So many evils will thus be remedied, which would not be by only warring with the islands. It would be an uncertain and expensive war to go to sea for the purpose of chastising the insolent English corsairs, however much they deserve chastisement. I charge you to be secret, to give the matter your deepest attention, and to let me have your opinions at once.” Philip then added a postscript, in his own hand, concerning the importance of acquiring a sea-port in Holland, as a basis of operations against England. “Without a port,” he said, “we can do nothing whatever.”

A few weeks later, the Grand Commander of Castile, by Philip’s orders, and upon subsequent information received from the Prince of Parma, drew up an elaborate scheme for the invasion of England, and for the government of that country afterwards; a program according to which the King was to shape his course for a long time to come. The plot was an excellent plot. Nothing could be more artistic, more satisfactory to the prudent monarch; but time was to show whether there might not be some difficulty in the way of its satisfactory development.



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“The enterprise,” said the Commander, “ought certainly to be undertaken as serving the cause of the Lord. From the Pope we must endeavour to extract a promise of the largest aid we can get for the time when the enterprise can be undertaken. We must not declare that time however, in order to keep the thing a secret, and because perhaps thus more will be promised, under the impression that it will never take effect. He added that the work could not well be attempted before August or September of the following year; the only fear of such delay being that the French could hardly be kept during all that time in a state of revolt.” For this was a uniform portion of the great scheme. France was to be kept, at Philip’s expense, in a state of perpetual civil war; its every city and village to be the scene of unceasing conflict and bloodshed—subjects in arms against king, and family against family; and the Netherlands were to be ravaged with fire and sword; all this in order that the path might be prepared for Spanish soldiers into the homes of England. So much of misery to the whole human race was it in the power of one painstaking elderly valetudinarian to inflict, by never for an instant neglecting the business of his life.

Troops and vessels for the English invasion ought, in the Commander’s opinion, to be collected in Flanders, under colour of an enterprise against Holland and Zeeland, while the armada to be assembled in Spain, of galleons, galeazas, and galleys, should be ostensibly for an expedition to the Indies.

Then, after the conquest, came arrangements for the government of England. Should Philip administer his new kingdom by a viceroy, or should he appoint a king out of his own family? On the whole the chances for the Prince of Parma seemed the best of any. “We must liberate the Queen of Scotland,” said the Grand Commander, “and marry her to some one or another, both in order to put her out of love with her son, and to conciliate her devoted adherents. Of course the husband should be one of your Majesty’s nephews, and none could be so appropriate as the Prince of Parma, that great captain, whom his talents, and the part he has to bear in the business, especially indicate for that honour.”

Then there was a difficulty about the possible issue of such a marriage. The Farneses claimed Portugal; so that children sprung from the bloodroyal of England blended with that of Parma, might choose to make those pretensions valid. But the objection was promptly solved by the Commander:—“The Queen of Scotland is sure to have no children,” he said.



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That matter being adjusted, Parma's probable attitude as King of England was examined. It was true his ambition might cause occasional uneasiness, but then he might make himself still more unpleasant in the Netherlands. "If your Majesty suspects him," said the Commander, "which, after all, is unfair, seeing the way, in which he has been conducting himself—it is to be remembered that in Flanders are similar circumstances and opportunities, and that he is well armed, much beloved in the country, and that the natives are of various humours. The English plan will furnish an honourable departure for him out of the Provinces; and the principle of loyal obligation will have much influence over so chivalrous a knight as he, when he is once placed on the English throne. Moreover, as he will be new there, he will have need of your Majesty's favour to maintain himself, and there will accordingly be good correspondence with Holland and the Islands. Thus your Majesty can put the Infanta and her husband into full possession of all the Netherlands; having provided them with so excellent a neighbour in England, and one so closely bound and allied to them. Then, as he is to have no English children" (we have seen that the Commander had settled that point) "he will be a very good mediator to arrange adoptions, especially if you make good provision for his son Rainuccio in Italy. The reasons in favour of this plan being so much stronger than those against it, it would be well that your Majesty should write clearly to the Prince of Parma, directing him to conduct the enterprise" (the English invasion), "and to give him the first offer for this marriage (with Queen Mary) if he likes the scheme. If not, he had better mention which of the Archdukes should be substituted in his place."

There happened to be no lack of archdukes at that period for anything comfortable that might offer—such as a throne in England, Holland, or France—and the Austrian House was not remarkable for refusing convenient marriages; but the immediate future only could show whether Alexander I. of the House of Farnese was to reign in England, or whether the next king of that country was to be called Matthias, Maximilian, or Ernest of Hapsburg.

Meantime the Grand Commander was of opinion that the invasion-project was to be pushed forward as rapidly and as secretly as possible; because, before any one of Philip's nephews could place himself upon the English throne, it was first necessary to remove Elizabeth from that position. Before disposing of the kingdom, the preliminary step of conquering it was necessary. Afterwards it would be desirable, without wasting more time than was requisite, to return with a large portion of the invading force out of England, in order to complete the conquest of Holland. For after all, England was to be subjugated only as a portion of one general scheme; the main features of which were the reannexation of Holland and "the islands," and the acquisition of unlimited control upon the seas.

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Thus the invasion of England was no “scarecrow,” as Wilford imagined, but a scheme already thoroughly matured. If Holland and Zeeland should meantime fall into the hands of Philip, it was no exaggeration on that soldier’s part to observe that the “freehold of England would be worth but little.”

To oppose this formidable array against the liberties of Europe stood Elizabeth Tudor and the Dutch Republic. For the Queen, however arbitrary her nature, fitly embodied much of the nobler elements in the expanding English national character. She felt instinctively that her reliance in the impending death-grapple was upon the popular principle, the national sentiment, both in her own country and in Holland. That principle and that sentiment were symbolized in the Netherland revolt; and England, although under a somewhat despotic rule, was already fully pervaded with the instinct of self-government. The people held the purse and the sword.

No tyranny could be permanently established so long as the sovereign was obliged to come every year before Parliament to ask for subsidies; so long as all the citizens and yeomen of England had weapons in their possession, and were carefully trained to use them; so long, in short, as the militia was the only army, and private adventurers or trading companies created and controlled the only navy. War, colonization, conquest, traffic, formed a joint business and a private speculation. If there were danger that England, yielding to purely mercantile habits of thought and action, might degenerate from the more martial standard to which she had been accustomed, there might be virtue in that Netherland enterprise, which was now to call forth all her energies. The Provinces would be a seminary for English soldiers.

“There can be no doubt of our driving the enemy out of the country through famine and excessive charges,” said the plain-spoken English soldier already quoted, who came out with Leicester, “if every one of us will put our minds to go forward without making a miserable gain by the wars. A man may see, by this little progress journey, what this long peace hath wrought in us. We are weary of the war before we come where it groweth, such a danger hath this long peace brought us into. This is, and will be, in my opinion, a most fit school and nursery to nourish soldiers to be able to keep and defend our country hereafter, if men will follow it.”

Wilford was vehement in denouncing the mercantile tendencies of his countrymen, and returned frequently to that point in his communications with Walsingham and other statesmen. “God hath stirred up this action,” he repeated again, “to be a school to breed up soldiers to defend the freedom of England, which through these long times of peace and quietness is brought into a most dangerous estate, if it should be attempted. Our delicacy is such that we are already weary, yet this journey is naught in respect to the misery and hardship that soldiers must and do endure.”



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He was right in his estimate of the effect likely to be produced by the war upon the military habits of Englishmen; for there can be no doubt that the organization and discipline of English troops was in anything but a satisfactory state at that period. There was certainly vast room for improvement. Nevertheless he was wrong in his views of the leading tendencies of his age. Holland and England, self-helping, self-moving, were already inaugurating a new era in the history of the world. The spirit of commercial maritime enterprise—then expanding rapidly into large proportions—was to be matched against the religious and knightly enthusiasm which had accomplished such wonders in an age that was passing away. Spain still personified, and had ever personified, chivalry, loyalty, piety; but its chivalry, loyalty, and piety, were now in a corrupted condition. The form was hollow, and the sacred spark had fled. In Holland and England intelligent enterprise had not yet degenerated into mere greed for material prosperity. The love of danger, the thirst for adventure, the thrilling sense of personal responsibility and human dignity—not the base love for land and lucre—were the governing sentiments which led those bold Dutch and English rovers to circumnavigate the world in cockle-shells, and to beard the most potent monarch on the earth, both at home and abroad, with a handful of volunteers.

This then was the contest, and this the machinery by which it was to be maintained. A struggle for national independence, liberty of conscience, freedom of the seas, against sacerdotal and world-absorbing tyranny; a mortal combat of the splendid infantry of Spain and Italy, the professional reiters of Germany, the floating castles of a world-empire, with the militiamen and mercantile-marine of England and Holland united. Holland had been engaged twenty years long in the conflict. England had thus far escaped it; but there was no doubt, and could be none, that her time had come. She must fight the battle of Protestantism on sea and shore, shoulder to shoulder, with the Netherlanders, or await the conqueror's foot on her own soil.

What now was the disposition and what the means of the Provinces to do their part in the contest? If the twain as Holland wished, had become of one flesh, would England have been the loser? Was it quite sure that Elizabeth—had she even accepted the less compromising title which she refused—would not have been quite as much the protected as the “protectress?”

It is very certain that the English, on their arrival in the Provinces, were singularly impressed by the opulent and stately appearance of the country and its inhabitants. Notwithstanding the tremendous war which the Hollanders had been waging against Spain for twenty years, their commerce had continued to thrive, and their resources to increase. Leicester was in a state of constant rapture at the magnificence which surrounded him, from his first entrance into



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the country. Notwithstanding the admiration expressed by the Hollanders for the individual sumptuousness of the Lieutenant-General; his followers, on their part, were startled by the general luxury of their new allies. "The realm is rich and full of men," said Wilford, "the sums men exceed in apparel would bear the brunt of this war;" and again, "if the excess used in sumptuous apparel were only abated, and that we could convert the same to these wars, it would stop a great gap."

The favourable view taken by the English as to the resources and inclination of the Netherland commonwealth was universal. "The general wish and desire of these countrymen," wrote Sir Thomas Shirley, "is that the amity begun between England and this nation may be everlasting, and there is not any of our company of judgment but wish the same. For all they that see the goodness and stateliness of these towns, strengthened both with fortification and natural situation, all able to defend themselves with their own abilities, must needs think it too fair a prey to be let pass, and a thing most worthy to be embraced."

Leicester, whose enthusiasm continued to increase as rapidly as the Queen's zeal seemed to be cooling, was most anxious lest the short-comings of his own Government should work irreparable evil. "I pray you, my lord," he wrote to Burghley, "forget not us poor exiles; if you do, God must and will forget you. And great pity it were that so noble provinces and goodly havens, with such infinite ships and mariners, should not be always as they may now easily be, at the assured devotion of England. In my opinion he can neither love Queen nor country that would not wish and further it should be so. And seeing her Majesty is thus far entered into the cause, and that these people comfort themselves in full hope of her favour, it were a sin and a shame it should not be handled accordingly, both for honour and surety."

Sir John Conway, who accompanied the Earl through the whole of his "progress journey," was quite as much struck as he by the flourishing aspect and English proclivities of the Provinces. "The countries which we have passed," he said, "are fertile in their nature; the towns, cities, buildings, of snore state and beauty, to such as have travelled other countries, than any they have ever seen. The people the most industrious by all means to live that be in the world, and, no doubt, passing rich. They outwardly show themselves of good heart, zeal, and loyalty, towards the Queen our mistress. There is no doubt that the general number of them had rather come under her Majesty's regiment, than to continue under the States and burgomasters of their country. The impositions which they lay in defence of their State is wonderful. If her Highness proceed in this beginning, she may retain these parts hers, with their good love, and her great glory and gain. I would she might as perfectly see the whole country, towns, profits, and pleasures



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thereof, in a glass, as she may her own face; I do then assure myself she would with careful consideration receive them, and not allow of any man's reason to the contrary . . . . The country is worthy any prince in the world, the people do reverence the Queen, and in love of her do so believe that the Grace of Leicester is by God and her sent among them for her good. And they believe in him for the redemption of their bodies, as they do in God for their souls. I dare pawn my soul, that if her Majesty will allow him the just and rightful mean to manage this cause, that he will so handle the manner and matter as shall highly both please and profit her Majesty, and increase her country, and his own honour."

Lord North, who held a high command in the auxiliary force, spoke also with great enthusiasm. "Had your Lordship seen," he wrote to Burghley, "with what thankful hearts these countries receive all her Majesty's subjects, what multitudes of people they be, what stately cities and buildings they have, how notably fortified by art, how strong by nature, how fertile the whole country, and how wealthy it is, you would, I know, praise the Lord that opened your lips to undertake this enterprise, the continuance and good success whereof will eternise her Majesty, beautify her crown, with the most shipping, with the most populous and wealthy countries, that ever prince added to his kingdom, or that is or can be found in Europe. I lack wit, good my Lord, to dilate this matter."

Leicester, better informed than some of those in his employment, entertained strong suspicions concerning Philip's intentions with regard to England; but he felt sure that the only way to laugh at a Spanish invasion was to make Holland and England as nearly one as it was possible to do.

"No doubt that the King of Spain's preparations by sea be great," he said; "but I know that all that he and his friends can make are not able to match with her Majesty's forces, if it please her to use the means that God hath given her. But besides her own, if she need; I will undertake to furnish her from hence, upon two months' warning, a navy for strong and tall ships, with their furniture and mariners, that the King of Spain, and all that he can make, shall not be able to encounter with them. I think the bruit of his preparations is made the greater to terrify her Majesty and this country people. But, thanked be God, her Majesty hath little cause to fear him. And in this country they esteem no more of his power by sea than I do of six fisher-boats off Rye."

Thus suggestive is it to peep occasionally behind the curtain. In the calm cabinet of the Escorial, Philip and his comendador mayor are laying their heads together, preparing the invasion of England; making arrangements for King Alexander's coronation in that island, and—like sensible, farsighted persons as they are—even settling the succession to the throne after Alexander's death, instead



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of carelessly leaving such distant details to chance, or subsequent consideration. On the other hand, plain Dutch sea-captains, grim beggars of the sea, and the like, denizens of a free commonwealth and of the boundless ocean-men who are at home on blue water, and who have burned gunpowder against those prodigious slave-rowed galleys of Spain—together with their new allies, the dauntless mariners of England—who at this very moment are “singeing the King of Spain’s beard,” as it had never been singed before—are not so much awestruck with the famous preparations for invasion as was perhaps to be expected. There may be a delay, after all, before Parma can be got safely established in London, and Elizabeth in Orcus, and before the blood-tribunal of the Inquisition can substitute its sway for that of the “most noble, wise, and learned United States.” Certainly, Philip the Prudent would have been startled, difficult as he was to astonish, could he have known that those rebel Hollanders of his made no more account of his slowly-preparing invincible armada than of six fisher-boats off Rye. Time alone could show where confidence had been best placed. Meantime it was certain, that it well behoved Holland and England to hold hard together, nor let “that enterprise quail.”

The famous expedition of Sir Francis Drake was the commencement of a revelation. “That is the string,” said Leicester, “that touches the King indeed.” It was soon to be made known to the world that the ocean was not a Spanish Lake, nor both the Indies the private property of Philip. “While the riches of the Indies continue,” said Leicester, “he thinketh he will be able to weary out all other princes; and I know, by good means, that he more feareth this action of Sir Francis than he ever did anything that has been attempted against him.” With these continued assaults upon the golden treasure-houses of Spain, and by a determined effort to maintain the still more important stronghold which had been wrested from her in the Netherlands, England might still be safe. “This country is so full of ships and mariners,” said Leicester, “so abundant in wealth, and in the means to make money, that, had it but stood neutral, what an aid had her Majesty been deprived of. But if it had been the enemy’s also, I leave it to your consideration what had been likely to ensue. These people do now honour and love her Majesty in marvellous sort.”

There was but one feeling on this most important subject among the English who went to the Netherlands. All held the same language. The question was plainly presented to England whether she would secure to herself the great bulwark of her defence, or place it in the hands of her mortal foe? How could there be doubt or supineness on such a momentous subject? “Surely, my Lord,” wrote Richard Cavendish to Burghley, “if you saw the wealth, the strength, the shipping, and abundance of mariners, whereof these countries stand furnished, your heart would quake to think that so hateful an enemy as Spain should again be furnished with such instruments; and the Spaniards themselves do nothing doubt upon the hope of the consequence hereof, to assure themselves of the certain ruin of her Majesty and the whole estate.”

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And yet at the very outset of Leicester's administration, there was a whisper of peace-overtures to Spain, secretly made by Elizabeth in her own behalf, and in that of the Provinces. We shall have soon occasion to examine into the truth of these rumours, which, whether originating in truth or falsehood, were most pernicious in their effects. The Hollanders were determined never to return to slavery again, so long as they could fire a shot in their own defence. They earnestly wished English cooperation, but it was the cooperation of English matchlocks and English cutlasses, not English protocols and apostilles. It was military, not diplomatic machinery that they required. If they could make up their minds to submit to Philip and the Inquisition again, Philip and the Holy office were but too ready to receive the erring penitents to their embrace without a go-between.

It was war, not peace, therefore, that Holland meant by the English alliance. It was war, not peace, that Philip intended. It was war, not peace, that Elizabeth's most trusty counsellors knew to be inevitable. There was also, as we have shown, no doubt whatever as to the good disposition, and the great power of the republic to bear its share in the common cause. The enthusiasm of the Hollanders was excessive. "There was such a noise, both in Delft, Rotterdam, and Dort," said Leicester, "in crying 'God save the Queen!' as if she had been in Cheapside." Her own subjects could not be more loyal than were the citizens and yeomen of Holland. "The members of the States dare not but be Queen Elizabeth's," continued the Earl, "for by the living God! if there should fall but the least unkindness through their default, the people would kill them. All sorts of people, from highest to lowest, assure themselves, now that they have her Majesty's good countenance, to beat all the Spaniards out of their country. Never was there people in such jollity as these be. I could be content to lose a limb, could her Majesty see these countries and towns as I have done." He was in truth excessively elated, and had already, in imagination, vanquished Alexander Farnese, and eclipsed the fame of William the Silent. "They will serve under me," he observed, "with a better will than ever they served under the Prince of Orange. Yet they loved him well, but they never hoped of the liberty of this country till now."

Thus the English government had every reason to be satisfied with the aspect of its affairs in the Netherlands. But the nature of the Earl's authority was indefinite. The Queen had refused the sovereignty and the protectorate. She had also distinctly and peremptorily forbidden Leicester to assume any office or title that might seem at variance with such a refusal on her part. Yet it is certain that, from the very first, he had contemplated some slight disobedience to these prohibitions. "What government is requisite"—wrote he in a secret memorandum of "things most necessary



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to understand”—“to be appointed to him that shall be their governor? First, that he have as much authority as the Prince of Orange, or any other governor or captain-general, hath had heretofore.” Now the Prince of Orange hath been stadholder of each of the United Provinces, governor-general, commander-in-chief, count of Holland in prospect, and sovereign, if he had so willed it. It would doubtless have been most desirable for the country, in its confused condition, had there been a person competent to wield, and willing to accept, the authority once exercised by William I. But it was also certain that this was exactly the authority which Elizabeth had forbidden Leicester to assume. Yet it is difficult to understand what position the Queen intended that her favourite should maintain, nor how he was to carry out her instructions, while submitting to her prohibitions. He was directed to cause the confused government of the Provinces to be redressed, and a better form of polity to be established. He was ordered, in particular, to procure a radical change in the constitution, by causing the deputies to the General Assembly to be empowered to decide upon important matters, without, as had always been the custom, making direct reference to the assemblies of the separate Provinces. He was instructed to bring about, in some indefinite way, a complete reform in financial matters, by compelling the States-General to raise money by liberal taxation, according to the “advice of her Majesty, delivered unto them by her lieutenant.”

And how was this radical change in the institutions of the Provinces to be made by an English earl, whose only authority was that of commander-in-chief over five thousand half-starved, unpaid, utterly-forlorn English troops?

The Netherland envoys in England, in their parting advice, most distinctly urged him “to hale authority with the first, to declare himself chief head and governor-general” of the whole country,—for it was a political head that was wanted in order to restore unity of action—not an additional general, where there were already generals in plenty. Sir John Norris, valiant, courageous, experienced—even if not, as Walsingham observed, a “religious soldier,” nor learned in anything “but a kind of licentious and corrupt government”—was not likely to require the assistance of the new lieutenant-general in field operations nor could the army be brought into a state of thorough discipline and efficiency by the magic of Leicester’s name. The rank and file of the English army—not the commanders-needed strengthening. The soldiers required shoes and stockings, bread and meat, and for these articles there were not the necessary funds, nor would the title of Lieutenant-General supply the deficiency. The little auxiliary force was, in truth, in a condition most pitiable to behold: it was difficult to say whether the soldiers who had been already for a considerable period in the Netherlands, or those who had been recently

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levied in the purlieus of London, were in the most unpromising plight. The beggarly state in which Elizabeth had been willing that her troops should go forth to the wars was a sin and a disgrace. Well might her Lieutenant-General say that her “poor subjects were no better than abjects.” There were few effective companies remaining of the old force. “There is but a small number of the first bands left,” said Sir John Conway, “and those so pitiful and unable ever to serve again, as I leave to speak further of theirs, to avoid grief to your heart. A monstrous fault there hath been somewhere.”

Leicester took a manful and sagacious course at starting. Those who had no stomach for the fight were ordered to depart. The chaplain gave them sermons; the Lieutenant-General, on St. Stephen’s day, made them a “pithy and honourable” oration, and those who had the wish or the means to buy themselves out of the adventure, were allowed to do so: for the Earl was much disgusted with the raw material out of which he was expected to manufacture serviceable troops. Swaggering ruffians from the disreputable haunts of London, cockney apprentices, brokendown tapsters, discarded serving men; the Bardolphs and Pistols, Mouldys, Warts, and the like—more at home in tavern-brawls or in dark lanes than on the battle-field—were not the men to be entrusted with the honour of England at a momentous crisis. He spoke with grief and shame of the worthless character and condition of the English youths sent over to the Netherlands. “Believe me,” said he, “you will all repent the cockney kind of bringing up at this day of young men. They be gone hence with shame enough, and too many, that I will warrant, will make as many frays with bludgeons and bucklers as any in London shall do; but such shall never have credit with me again. Our simplest men in show have been our best men, and your gallant blood and ruffian men the worst of all others.”

Much winnowed, as it was, the small force might in time become more effective; and the Earl spent freely of his own substance to supply the wants of his followers, and to atone for the avarice of his sovereign. The picture painted however by muster-master Digger of the plumed troops that had thus come forth to maintain the honour of England and the cause of liberty, was anything but imposing. None knew better than Digges their squalid and slovenly condition, or was more anxious to effect a reformation therein. “A very wise, stout fellow he is,” said the Earl, “and very careful to serve thoroughly her Majesty.” Leicester relied much upon his efforts. “There is good hope,” said the muster-master, “that his excellency will shortly establish such good order for the government and training of our nation, that these weak, bad-furnished, ill-armed, and worse-trained bands, thus rawly left unto him, shall within a few months prove as well armed, trained, complete, gallant companies as shall be found elsewhere in Europe.” The damage

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they were likely to inflict upon the enemy seemed very problematical, until they should have been improved by some wholesome ball-practice. "They are so unskilful," said Digger, "that if they should be carried to the field no better trained than yet they are, they would prove much more dangerous to their own leaders and companies than any ways serviceable on their enemies. The hard and miserable estate of the soldiers generally, excepting officers, hath been such, as by the confessions of the captains themselves, they have been offered by many of their soldiers thirty and forty pounds a piece to be dismissed and sent away; whereby I doubt not the flower of the pressed English bands are gone, and the remnant supplied with such paddy persons as commonly, in voluntary procurements, men are glad to accept."

Even after the expiration of four months the condition of the paddy persons continued most destitute. The English soldiers became mere barefoot starving beggars in the streets, as had never been the case in the worst of times, when the States were their paymasters. The little money brought from the treasury by the Earl, and the large sums which he had contributed out of his own pocket, had been spent in settling, and not fully settling, old scores. "Let me entreat you," wrote Leicester to Walsingham, "to be a mean to her Majesty, that the poor soldiers be not beaten for my sake. There came no penny of treasure over since my coming hither. That which then came was most part due before it came. There is much still due. They cannot get a penny, their credit is spent, they perish for want of victuals and clothing in great numbers. The whole are ready to mutiny. They cannot be gotten out to service, because they cannot discharge the debts they owe in the places where they are. I have let of my own more than I may spare."—"There was no soldier yet able to buy himself a pair of hose," said the Earl again, "and it is too, too great shame to see how they go, and it kills their hearts to show themselves among men."

There was no one to dispute the Earl's claims. The Nassau family was desperately poor, and its chief, young Maurice, although he had been elected stadholder of Holland and Zeeland, had every disposition—as Sir Philip upon his arrival in Flushing immediately informed his uncle—to submit to the authority of the new governor. Louisa de Coligny, widow of William the Silent, was most anxious for the English alliance, through which alone she believed that the fallen fortunes of the family could be raised. It was thus only, she thought, that the vengeance for which she thirsted upon the murderers of her father and her husband could be obtained. "We see now," she wrote to Walsingham, in a fiercer strain than would seem to comport with so gentle a nature—deeply wronged as the daughter of Coligny and the wife of Orange had been by Papists—"we see now the effects of our God's promises. He knows when it pleases Him to avenge the blood



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of His own; and I confess that I feel most keenly the joy which is shared in by the whole Church of God. There is none that has received more wrong from these murderers than I have done, and I esteem myself happy in the midst of my miseries that God has permitted me to see some vengeance. These beginings make me hope that I shall see yet more, which will be not less useful to the good, both in your country and in these isles.”

There was no disguise as to the impoverished condition to which the Nassau family had been reduced by the self-devotion of its chief. They were obliged to ask alms of England, until the “sapling should become a tree.”—“Since it is the will of God,” wrote the Princess to Davison, “I am not ashamed to declare the necessity of our house, for it is in His cause that it has fallen. I pray you, Sir, therefore to do me and these children the favour to employ your thoughts in this regard.” If there had been any strong French proclivities on their part—as had been so warmly asserted—they were likely to disappear. Villiers, who had been a confidential friend of William the Silent, and a strong favourer of France, in vain endeavoured to keep alive the ancient sentiments towards that country, although he was thought to be really endeavouring to bring about a submission of the Nassaus to Spain. “This Villiers,” said Leicester, “is a most vile traitorous knave, and doth abuse a young nobleman here extremely, the Count Maurice. For all his religion, he is a more earnest persuader secretly to have him yield to a reconciliation than Sainte Aldegonde was. He shall not tarry ten days neither in Holland nor Zeeland. He is greatly hated here of all sorts, and it shall go hard but I will win the young Count.”

As for Hohenlo, whatever his opinions might once have been regarding the comparative merits of Frenchmen and Englishmen, he was now warmly in favour of England, and expressed an intention of putting an end to the Villiers’ influence by simply drowning Villiers. The announcement of this summary process towards the counsellor was not untinged with rudeness towards the pupil. “The young Count,” said Leicester, “by Villiers’ means, was not willing to have Flushing rendered, which the Count Hollock perceiving, told the Count Maurice, in a great rage, that if he took any course than that of the Queen of England, and swore by no beggars, he would drown his priest in the haven before his face, and turn himself and his mother-in-law out of their house there, and thereupon went with Mr. Davison to the delivery of it.” Certainly, if Hohenlo permitted himself such startling demonstrations towards the son and widow of William the Silent, it must have been after his habitual potations had been of the deepest. Nevertheless it was satisfactory for the new chieftain to know that the influence of so vehement a partisan was secured for England. The Count’s zeal deserved gratitude upon Leicester’s part, and Leicester was grateful. “This



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man must be cherished," said the Earl; "he is sound and faithful, and hath indeed all the chief holds in his hands, and at his commandment. Ye shall do well to procure him a letter of thanks, taking knowledge in general of his good-will to her Majesty. He is a right Almayn in manner and fashion, free of his purse and of his drink, yet do I wish him her Majesty's pensioner before any prince in Germany, for he loves her and is able to serve her, and doth desire to be known her servant. He hath been laboured by his nearest kinsfolk and friends in Germany to have left the States and to have the King of Spain's pension and very great reward; but he would not. I trust her Majesty will accept of his offer to be her servant during his life, being indeed a very noble soldier." The Earl was indeed inclined to take so cheerful view of matters as to believe that he should even effect a reform in the noble soldier's most unpleasant characteristic. "Hollock is a wise gallant gentleman," he said, "and very well esteemed. He hath only one fault, which is drinking; but good hope that he will amend it. Some make me believe that I shall be able to do much with him, and I mean to do my best, for I see no man that knows all these countries, and the people of all sorts, like him, and this fault overthrows all."

Accordingly, so long as Maurice continued under the tutelage of this uproarious cavalier—who, at a later day, was to become his brother-in-law—he was not likely to interfere with Leicester's authority. The character of the young Count was developing slowly. More than his father had ever done, he deserved the character of the taciturn. A quiet keen observer of men and things, not demonstrative nor talkative, nor much given to writing—a modest, calm, deeply-reflecting student of military and mathematical science—he was not at that moment deeply inspired by political ambition. He was perhaps more desirous of raising the fallen fortunes of his house than of securing the independence of his country. Even at that early age, however, his mind was not easy to read, and his character was somewhat of a puzzle to those who studied it. "I see him much discontented with the States," said Leicester; "he hath a sullen deep wit. The young gentleman is yet to be won only to her Majesty, I perceive, of his own inclination. The house is marvellous poor and little regarded by the States, and if they get anything it is like to be by her Majesty, which should be altogether, and she may easily, do for him to win him sure. I will undertake it." Yet the Earl was ever anxious about some of the influences which surrounded Maurice, for he thought him more easily guided than he wished him to be by any others but himself. "He stands upon making and marring," he said, "as he meets with good counsel." And at another time he observed, "The young gentleman hath a solemn sly wit; but, in troth, if any be to be doubted toward the King of Spain, it is he and his counsellors, for they have been altogether, so far, French, and so far in mislike with England as they cannot almost hide it."

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And there was still another member of the house of Nassau who was already an honour to his illustrious race. Count William Lewis, hardly more than a boy in years, had already served many campaigns, and had been desperately wounded in the cause for which so much of the heroic blood of his race had been shed. Of the five Nassau brethren, his father Count John was the sole survivor, and as devoted as ever to the cause of Netherland liberty. The other four had already laid down their lives in its defence. And William Lewis, was worthy to be the nephew of William and Lewis, Henry and Adolphus, and the son of John. Not at all a beautiful or romantic hero in appearance, but an odd-looking little man, with a round bullet-head, close-clipped hair, a small, twinkling, sagacious eye, rugged, somewhat puffy features screwed whimsically awry, with several prominent warts dotting, without ornamenting, all that was visible of a face which was buried up to the ears in a furzy thicket of yellow-brown beard, the tough young stadholder of Friesland, in his iron corslet, and halting upon his maimed leg, had come forth with other notable personages to the Hague.

He wished to do honour heartily and freely to Queen Elizabeth and her representative. And Leicester was favourably impressed with his new acquaintance. "Here is another little fellow," he said, "as little as may be, but one of the gravest and wisest young men that ever I spake withal; it is the Count Guilliam of Nassau. He governs Friesland; I would every Province had such another."

Thus, upon the great question which presented itself upon the very threshold—the nature and extent of the authority to be exercised by Leicester—the most influential Netherlanders were in favour of a large and liberal interpretation of his powers. The envoys in England, the Nassau family Hohenlo, the prominent members of the States, such as the shrewd, plausible Menin, the "honest and painful" Falk, and the chancellor of Gelderland—"that very great, wise, old man Leoninus," as Leicester called him,—were all desirous that he should assume an absolute governor-generalship over the whole country. This was a grave and a delicate matter, and needed to be severely scanned, without delay. But besides the natives, there were two Englishmen—together with ambassador Davison—who were his official advisers. Bartholomew Clerk, LL.D., and Sir Henry Killigrew had been appointed by the Queen to be members of the council of the United States, according to the provisions of the August treaty. The learned Bartholomew hardly seemed equal to his responsible position among those long-headed Dutch politicians. Philip Sidney—the only blemish in whose character was an intolerable tendency to puns—observed that "Doctor Clerk was of those clerks that are not always the wisest, and so my lord too late was finding him." The Earl himself, who never undervalued the intellect of the Netherlanders whom

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he came to govern, anticipated but small assistance from the English civilian. "I find no great stuff in my little colleague," he said, "nothing that I looked for. It is a pity you have no more of his profession, able men to serve. This man hath good will, and a pretty scholar's wit; but he is too little for these big fellows, as heavy as her Majesty thinks them to be. I would she had but one or two, such as the worst of half a score be here." The other English statecounsellor seemed more promising. "I have one here," said the Earl, "in whom I take no small comfort; that is little Hal Killigrew. I assure you, my lord, he is a notable servant, and more in him than ever I heretofore thought of him, though I always knew him to be an honest man and an able."

But of all the men that stood by Leicester's side, the most faithful, devoted, sagacious, experienced, and sincere of his counsellors, English or Flemish, was envoy Davison. It is important to note exactly the opinion that had been formed of him by those most competent to judge, before events in which he was called on to play a prominent and responsible though secondary part, had placed him in a somewhat false position.

"Mr. Davison," wrote Sidney, "is here very careful in her Majesty's causes, and in your Lordship's. He takes great pains and goes to great charges for it." The Earl himself was always vehement in his praise. "Mr. Davison," said he at another time, "has dealt most painfully and chargeably in her Majesty's service here, and you shall find him as sufficiently able to deliver the whole state of this country as any man that ever was in it, acquainted with all sorts here that are men of dealing. Surely, my Lord, you shall do a good deed that he may be remembered with her Majesty's gracious consideration, for his being here has been very chargeable, having kept a very good countenance, and a very good table, all his abode here, and of such credit with all the chief sort, as I know no stranger in any place hath the like. As I am a suitor to you to be his good friend to her Majesty, so I must heartily pray you, good my Lord, to procure his coming hither shortly to me again, for I know not almost how to do without him. I confess it is a wrong to the gentleman, and I protest before God, if it were for mine own particular respect, I would not require it for L5000. But your Lordship doth little think how greatly I have to do, as also how needful for her Majesty's service his being here will, be. Wherefore, good my Lord, if it may not offend her Majesty, be a mean for this my request, for her own service' sake wholly."

Such were the personages who surrounded the Earl on his arrival in the Netherlands, and such their sentiments respecting the position that it was desirable for him to assume. But there was one very important fact. He had studiously concealed from Davison that the Queen had peremptorily and distinctly forbidden his accepting the office of governor-general. It seemed reasonable, if he came thither at all, that he should come in that elevated capacity. The Staten wished it. The Earl ardently longed for it. The ambassador, who knew more of Netherland politics and Netherland humours

than any man did, approved of it. The interests of both England and Holland seemed to require it. No one but Leicester knew that her Majesty had forbidden it.



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Accordingly, no sooner had the bell-ringing, cannon-explosions, bonfires, and charades, come to an end, and the Earl got fairly housed in the Hague, than the States took the affair of government seriously in hand.

On the 9th January, Chancellor Leoninus and Paul Buys waited upon Davison, and requested a copy of the commission granted by the Queen to the Earl. The copy was refused, but the commission was read; by which it appeared that he had received absolute command over her Majesty's forces in the Netherlands by land and sea, together with authority to send for all gentlemen and other personages out of England that he might think useful to him. On the 10th the States passed a resolution to offer him the governor-generalship over all the Provinces. On the same day another committee waited upon his "Excellency"—as the States chose to denominate the Earl, much to the subsequent wrath of the Queen—and made an appointment for the whole body to wait upon him the following morning.

Upon that day accordingly—New Year's Day, by the English reckoning, 11th January by the New Style—the deputies of all the States at an early hour came to his lodgings, with much pomp, preceded by a herald and trumpeters. Leicester, not expecting them quite so soon, was in his dressing-room, getting ready for the solemn audience, when, somewhat to his dismay, a flourish of trumpets announced the arrival of the whole body in his principal hall of audience. Hastening his preparations as much as possible, he descended to that apartment, and was instantly saluted by a flourish of rhetoric still more formidable; for that "very great, and wise old Leoninus," forthwith began an oration, which promised to be of portentous length and serious meaning. The Earl was slightly flustered, when, fortunately; some one whispered in his ear that they had come to offer him the much-coveted prize of the stadholderate-general. Thereupon he made bold to interrupt the flow of the chancellor's eloquence in its first outpourings. "As this is a very private matter," said he, "it will be better to treat of it in a more private place I pray you therefore to come into my chamber, where these things may be more conveniently discussed."

"You hear what my Lord says," cried Leoninus, turning to his companions; "we are to withdraw into his chamber."

Accordingly they withdrew, accompanied by the Earl, and by five or six select counsellors, among whom were Davison and Dr. Clerk. Then the chancellor once more commenced his harangue, and went handsomely through the usual forms of compliment, first to the Queen, and then to her representative, concluding with an earnest request that the Earl— although her Majesty had declined the sovereignty "would take the name and place of absolute governor and general of all their forces and soldiers, with the disposition of their whole revenues and taxes."

So soon as the oration was concluded, Leicester; who did not speak French, directed Davison to reply in that language.



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The envoy accordingly, in name of the Earl, expressed the deepest gratitude for this mark of the affection and confidence of the States-General towards the Queen. He assured them that the step thus taken by them would be the cause of still more favour and affection on the part of her Majesty, who would unquestionably, from day to day, augment the succour that she was extending to the Provinces in order to relieve men from their misery. For himself, the Earl protested that he could never sufficiently recompense the States for the honour which had thus been conferred upon him, even if he should live one hundred lives. Although he felt himself quite unable to sustain the weight of so great an office, yet he declared that they might repose with full confidence on his integrity and good intentions. Nevertheless, as the authority thus offered to him was very arduous, and as the subject required deep deliberation, he requested that the proposition should be reduced to writing, and delivered into his hands. He might then come to a conclusion thereupon, most conducive to the glory of God and the welfare of the land.

Three days afterwards, 14th January, the offer, drawn up formally in writing, was presented to envoy Davison, according to the request of Leicester. Three days latter, 17th January, his Excellency having deliberated upon the proposition, requested a committee of conference. The conference took place the same day, and there was some discussion upon matters of detail, principally relating to the matter of contributions. The Earl, according to the report of the committee, manifested no repugnance to the acceptance of the office, provided these points could be satisfactorily adjusted. He seemed, on the contrary, impatient, rather than reluctant; for, on the day following the conference, he sent his secretary Gilpin with a somewhat importunate message. "His Excellency was surprised," said the secretary, "that the States were so long in coming to a resolution on the matters suggested by him in relation to the offer of the government-general; nor could his Excellency imagine the cause of the delay."

For, in truth, the delay was caused by an excessive, rather than a deficient, appetite for power on the part of his Excellency. The States, while conferring what they called the "absolute" government, by which it afterwards appeared that they meant absolute, in regard to time, not to function—were very properly desirous of retaining a wholesome control over that government by means of the state-council. They wished not only to establish such a council, as a check upon the authority of the new governor, but to share with him at least in the appointment of the members who were to compose the board. But the aristocratic Earl was already restive under the thought of any restraint—most of all the restraint of individuals belonging to what he considered the humbler classes.



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“Cousin, my lord ambassador,” said he to Davison, “among your sober companions be it always remembered, I beseech you, that your cousin have no other alliance but with gentle blood. By no means consent that he be linked in faster bonds than their absolute grant may yield him a free and honourable government, to be able to do such service as shall be meet for an honest man to perform in such a calling, which of itself is very noble. But yet it is not more to be embraced, if I were to be led in alliance by such keepers as will sooner draw my nose from the right scent of the chace, than to lead my feet in the true pace to pursue the game I desire to reach. Consider, I pray you, therefore, what is to be done, and how unfit it will be in respect of my poor self, and how unacceptable to her Majesty, and how advantageous to enemies that will seek holes in my coat, if I should take so great a name upon me, and so little power. They challenge acceptation already, and I challenge their absolute grant and offer to me, before they spoke of any instructions; for so it was when Leoninus first spoke to me with them all on New Years Day, as you heard—offering in his speech all manner of absolute authority. If it please them to confirm this, without restraining instructions, I will willingly serve the States, or else, with such advising instructions as the Dowager of Hungary had.”

This was explicit enough, and Davison, who always acted for Leicester in the negotiations with the States, could certainly have no doubt as to the desires of the Earl, on the subject of “absolute” authority. He did accordingly what he could to bring the States to his Excellency’s way of thinking; nor was he unsuccessful.

On the 22nd January, a committee of conference was sent by the States to Leyden, in which city Leicester was making a brief visit. They were instructed to procure his consent, if possible, to the appointment, by the States themselves, of a council consisting of members from each Province. If they could not obtain this concession, they were directed to insist as earnestly as possible upon their right to present a double list of candidates, from which he was to make nominations. And if the one and the other proposition should be refused, the States were then to agree that his Excellency should freely choose and appoint a council of state, consisting of native residents from every Province, for the period of one year. The committee was further authorised to arrange the commission for the governor, in accordance with these points; and to draw up a set of instructions for the state-council, to the satisfaction of his Excellency. The committee was also empowered to conclude the matter at once, without further reference to the States.

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Certainly a committee thus instructed was likely to be sufficiently pliant. It had need to be, in order to bend to the humour of his Excellency, which was already becoming imperious. The adulation which he had received; the triumphal marches, the Latin orations, the flowers strewn in his path, had produced their effect, and the Earl was almost inclined to assume the airs of royalty. The committee waited upon him at Leyden. He affected a reluctance to accept the “absolute” government, but his coyness could not deceive such experienced statesmen as the “wise old Leoliinus,” or Menin, Maalzoon, Florin Thin, or Aitzma, who composed the deputation. It was obvious enough to them that it was not a King Log that had descended among them, but it was not a moment for complaining. The governor elect insisted, of course, that the two Englishmen, according to the treaty with her Majesty, should be members of, the council. He also, at once, nominated Leoninus, Meetkerk, Brederode, Falck, and Paul Buys, to the same office; thinking, no doubt, that these were five keepers—if keepers he must have—who would not draw his nose off the scent, nor prevent his reaching the game he hunted, whatever that game might be. It was reserved for the future, however, to show, whether, the five were like to hunt in company with him as harmoniously as he hoped. As to the other counsellors, he expressed a willingness that candidates should be proposed for him, as to whose qualifications he would make up his mind at leisure.

This matter being satisfactorily adjusted—and certainly unless the game pursued by the Earl was a crown royal, he ought to have been satisfied with his success—the States received a letter from their committee at Leyden, informing them that his Excellency, after some previous protestations, had accepted the government (24th January, 1586).

It was agreed that he should be inaugurated Governor-General of the United Provinces of Gelderland and Zutphen, Flanders, Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, and all others in confederacy with them. He was to have supreme military command by land and sea. He was to exercise supreme authority in matters civil and political, according to the customs prevalent in the reign of the Emperor Charles V. All officers, political, civil, legal, were to be appointed by him out of a double or triple nomination made by the States of the Provinces in which vacancies might occur. The States-General were to assemble whenever and wherever he should summon them. They were also—as were the States of each separate Province—competent to meet together by their own appointment. The Governor-General was to receive an oath of fidelity from the States, and himself to swear the maintenance of the ancient laws, customs, and privileges of the country.



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The deed was done. In vain had an emissary of the French court been exerting his utmost to prevent the consummation of this close alliance. For the wretched government of Henry III., while abasing itself before Philip II., and offering the fair cities and fertile plains of France as a sacrifice to that insatiable ambition which wore the mask of religious bigotry, was most anxious that Holland and England should not escape the meshes by which it was itself enveloped. The agent at the Hague came nominally upon some mercantile affairs, but in reality, according to Leicester, "to impeach the States from binding themselves to her Majesty." But he was informed that there was then no leisure for his affairs; "for the States would attend to the service of the Queen of England, before all princes in the world." The agent did not feel complimented by the coolness of this reception; yet it was reasonable enough, certainly, that the Hollanders should remember with bitterness the contumely, which they had experienced the previous year in France. The emissary was; however, much disgusted. "The fellow," said Leicester, "took it in such snuff, that he came proudly to the States and offered his letters, saying; 'Now I trust you have done all your sacrifices to the Queen of England, and may yield me some leisure to read my masters letters.'"—"But they so shook him, up," continued the Earl, "for naming her Majesty in scorn—as they took it—that they hurled him his letters; and bid him content himself;" and so on, much to the agent's discomfiture, who retired in greater "snuff" than ever.

So much for the French influence. And now Leicester had done exactly what the most imperious woman in the world, whose favour was the breath of his life, had expressly forbidden him to do. The step having been taken, the prize so tempting to his ambition having been snatched, and the policy which had governed the united action of the States and himself seeming so sound, what ought he to have done in order to avert the tempest which he must have foreseen? Surely a man who knew so much of woman's nature and of Elizabeth's nature as he did, ought to have attempted to conciliate her affections, after having so deeply wounded her pride. He knew his power. Besides the graces of his person and manner—which few women, once impressed by them, could ever forget—he possessed the most insidious and flattering eloquence, and, in absence, his pen was as wily as his tongue. For the Earl was imbued with the very genius of courtship. None was better skilled than he in the phrases of rapturous devotion, which were music to the ear both of the woman and the Queen; and he knew his royal mistress too well not to be aware that the language of passionate idolatry, however extravagant, had rarely fallen unheeded upon her soul. It was strange therefore, that in this emergency, he should not at once throw himself upon her compassion without any mediator. Yet, on the contrary, he committed



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the monstrous error of entrusting his defence to envoy Davison, whom he determined to despatch at once with instructions to the Queen, and towards whom he committed the grave offence of concealing from him her previous prohibitions. But how could the Earl fail to perceive that it was the woman, not the Queen, whom he should have implored for pardon; that it was Robert Dudley, not William Davison, who ought to have sued upon his knees. This whole matter of the Netherland sovereignty and the Leicester stadholderate, forms a strange psychological study, which deserves and requires some minuteness of attention; for it was by the characteristics of these eminent personages that the current history was deeply stamped.

Certainly, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, the first letter conveying intelligence so likely to pique the pride of Elizabeth, should have been a letter from Leicester. On the contrary, it proved to be a dull formal epistle from the States.

And here again the assistance of the indispensable Davison was considered necessary. On the 3rd February the ambassador—having announced his intention of going to England, by command of his Excellency, so soon as the Earl should have been inaugurated, for the purpose of explaining all these important transactions to her Majesty—waited upon the States with the request that they should prepare as speedily as might be their letter to the Queen, with other necessary documents, to be entrusted to his care. He also suggested that the draft or minute of their proposed epistle should be submitted to him for advice—“because the humours of her Majesty were best known to him.”

Now the humours of her Majesty were best known to Leicester of all men in the whole world, and it is inconceivable that he should have allowed so many days and weeks to pass without taking these humours properly into account. But the Earl's head was slightly turned by his sudden and unexpected success. The game that he had been pursuing had fallen into his grasp, almost at the very start, and it is not astonishing that he should have been somewhat absorbed in the enjoyment of his victory.

Three days later (6th February) the minute of a letter to Elizabeth, drawn up by Menin, was submitted to the ambassador; eight days after that (14th February) Mr. Davison took leave of the States, and set forth for the Brill on his way to England; and three or four days later yet, he was still in that sea-port, waiting for a favourable wind. Thus from the 11th January, N.S., upon which day the first offer of the absolute government had been made to Leicester, nearly forty days had elapsed, during which long period the disobedient Earl had not sent one line, private or official, to her Majesty on this most important subject. And when at last the Queen was to receive information of her favourite's delinquency, it was not to be in his well-known handwriting and accompanied by his penitent tears and written caresses, but to be laid before her with all the formality of parchment and sealingwax, in the stilted diplomatic jargon of those “highly-mighty,

very learned, wise, and very foreseeing gentlemen, my lords the States-General.”  
Nothing could have been managed with less adroitness.



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Meantime, not heeding the storm gathering beyond the narrow seas, the new governor was enjoying the full sunshine of power. On the 4th February the ceremony of his inauguration took place, with great pomp and ceremony at the Hague.

The beautiful, placid, village-capital of Holland wore much the same aspect at that day as now. Clean, quiet, spacious streets, shaded with rows of whispering poplars and umbrageous limes, broad sleepy canals— those liquid highways alone; which glided in phantom silence the bustle, and traffic, and countless cares of a stirring population— quaint toppling houses, with tower and gable; ancient brick churches, with slender spire and musical chimes; thatched cottages on the outskirts, with stork-nests on the roofs— the whole without fortification save the watery defences which enclosed it with long-drawn lines on every side; such was the Count's park, or 's Graven Haage, in English called the Hague.

It was embowered and almost buried out of sight by vast groves of oaks and beeches. Ancient Badahuennan forests of sanguinary Druids, the "wild wood without mercy" of Saxon savages, where, at a later period, sovereign Dirks and Florences, in long succession of centuries, had ridden abroad with lance in rest, or hawk on fist; or under whose boughs, in still nearer days, the gentle Jacqueline had pondered and wept over her sorrows, stretched out in every direction between the city and the neighbouring sea. In the heart of the place stood the ancient palace of the counts, built in the thirteenth century by William II. of Holland, King of the Romans, with massive brick walls, cylindrical turrets, pointed gable and rose-shaped windows, and with spacious coup-yard, enclosed by feudal moat, drawbridge, and portcullis.

In the great banqueting-hall of the ancient palace, whose cedarn-roof of magnificent timber-work, brought by crusading counts from the Holy Land, had rung with the echoes of many a gigantic revel in the days of chivalry—an apartment one hundred and fifty feet long and forty feet high—there had been arranged an elevated platform, with a splendid chair of state for the "absolute" governor, and with a great profusion of gilding and velvet tapestry, hangings, gilt emblems, complimentary devices, lions, unicorns, and other imposing appurtenances. Prince Maurice, and all the members of his house, the States-General in full costume, and all the great functionaries, civil and military, were assembled. There was an elaborate harangue by orator Menin, in which it was proved; by copious citations from Holy Writ and from ancient chronicle, that the Lord never forsakes His own; so that now, when the Provinces were at their last gasp by the death of Orange and the loss of Antwerp, the Queen of England and the Earl of Leicester had suddenly descended, as if from Heaven; to their rescue. Then the oaths of mutual fidelity were exchanged between the governor and the States, and, in conclusion, Dr. Bartholomew Clerk ventured to measure himself with the "big fellows," by pronouncing an oration which seemed to command universal approbation. And thus the Earl was duly installed Governor-General of the United States of the Netherlands.



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But already the first mutterings of the storm were audible. A bird in the air had whispered to the Queen that her favourite was inclined to disobedience. "Some flying tale hath been told me here," wrote Leicester to Walsingham, "that her Majesty should mislike my name of Excellency. But if I had delighted, or would have received titles, I refused a title higher than Excellency, as Mr. Davison, if you ask him, will tell you; and that I, my own self, refused most earnestly that, and, if I might have done it, this also." Certainly, if the Queen objected to this common form of address, which had always been bestowed upon Leicester, as he himself observed, ever since she had made him an earl, it might be supposed that her wrath would mount high when she should hear of him as absolute governor-general. It is also difficult to say what higher title he had refused, for certainly the records show that he had refused nothing, in the way of power and dignity, that it was possible for him to obtain.

But very soon afterwards arrived authentic intelligence that the Queen had been informed of the proposition made on New Year's-Day (O.S.), and that, although she could not imagine the possibility of his accepting, she was indignant that he had not peremptorily rejected the offer.

"As to the proposal made to you," wrote Burghley, "by the mouth of Leoninus, her Majesty hath been informed that you had thanked them in her name, and alledged that there was no such thing in the contract, and that therefore you could not accept nor knew how to answer the same."

Now this information was obviously far from correct, although it had been furnished by the Earl himself to Burghley. We have seen that Leicester had by no means rejected, but very gratefully entertained, the proposition as soon as made. Nevertheless the Queen was dissatisfied, even without suspecting that she had been directly disobeyed. "Her Majesty," continued the Lord-Treasurer; "is much offended with this proceeding. She allows not that you should give them thanks, but findeth it very strange that you did not plainly declare to them that they did well know how often her Majesty had refused to have any one for her take any such government there, and that she had always so answered peremptorily. Therefore there might be some suspicion conceived that by offering on their part, and refusal on hers, some further mischief might be secretly hidden by some odd person's device to the hurt of the cause. But in that your Lordship did not flatly say to them that yourself did know her Majesty's mind therein, that she never meant, in this sort, to take the absolute government, she is offended considering, as she saith, that none knew her determination therein better than yourself. For at your going hence, she did peremptorily charge you not to accept any such title and office; and therefore her straight commandment now is that you shall not accept the same, for she will never assent thereto, nor avow you with any such title."



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If Elizabeth was so wrathful, even while supposing that the offer had been gratefully declined, what were likely to be her emotions when she should be informed that it had been gratefully accepted. The Earl already began to tremble at the probable consequences of his mal-adroitness. Grave was the error he had committed in getting himself made governor-general against orders; graver still, perhaps fatal, the blunder of not being swift to confess his fault, and cry for pardon, before other tongues should have time to aggravate his offence. Yet even now he shrank from addressing the Queen in person, but hoped to conjure the rising storm by means of the magic wand of the Lord-Treasurer. He implored his friend's interposition to shield him in the emergency, and begged that at least her Majesty and the lords of council would suspend their judgment until Mr. Davison should deliver those messages and explanations with which, fully freighted, he was about to set sail from the Brill.

"If my reasons seem to your wisdoms," said he, "other than such as might well move a true and a faithful careful man to her Majesty to do as I have done, I do desire, for my mistaking offence, to bear the burden of it; to be disavowed with all displeasure and disgrace; a matter of as great reproach and grief as ever can happen to any man." He begged that another person might be sent as soon as possible in his place—protesting, however, by his faith in Christ, that he had done only what he was bound to do by his regard for her Majesty's service—and that when he set foot in the country he had no more expected to be made Governor of the Netherlands than to be made King of Spain. Certainly he had been paying dear for the honour, if honour it was, and he had not intended on setting forth for the Provinces to ruin himself, for the sake of an empty title. His motives—and he was honest, when he so avowed them—were motives of state at least as much as of self-advancement. "I have no cause," he said, "to have played the fool thus far for myself; first, to have her Majesty's displeasure, which no kingdom in the world could make me willingly deserve; next, to undo myself in my later days; to consume all that should have kept me all my life in one half year. But I must thank God for all, and am most heartily grieved at her Majesty's heavy displeasure. I neither desire to live, nor to see my country with it."

And at this bitter thought, he began to sigh like furnace, and to shed the big tears of penitence.

"For if I have not done her Majesty good service at this time," he said, "I shall never hope to do her any, but will withdraw me into some out-corner of the world, where I will languish out the rest of my few-too many-days, praying ever for her Majesty's long and prosperous life, and with this only comfort to live an exile, that this disgrace hath happened for no other cause but for my mere regard for her Majesty's estate."



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Having painted this dismal picture of the probable termination to his career—not in the hope of melting Burghley but of touching the heart of Elizabeth—he proceeded to argue the point in question with much logic and sagacity. He had satisfied himself on his arrival in the Provinces, that, if he did not take the governor-generalship some other person would; and that it certainly was for the interest of her Majesty that her devoted servant, rather than an indifferent person, should be placed in that important position. He maintained that the Queen had intimated, to him, in private, her willingness that he should accept the office in question provided the proposition should come from the States and not from her; he reasoned that the double nature of his functions—being general and counsellor for her, as well as general and counsellor for the Provinces—made his acceptance of the authority conferred on him almost indispensable; that for him to be merely commander over five thousand English troops, when an abler soldier than himself, Sir John Norris, was at their head, was hardly worthy her Majesty's service or himself, and that in reality the Queen had lost nothing, by his appointment, but had gained much benefit and honour by thus having the whole command of the Provinces, of their forces by land and sea, of their towns and treasures, with knowledge of all their secrets of state.

Then, relapsing into a vein of tender but reproachful melancholy, he observed, that, if it had been any man but himself that had done as he had done, he would have been thanked, not censured. "But such is now my wretched case," he said, "as for my faithful, true, and loving heart to her Majesty and my country, I have utterly undone myself. For favour, I have disgrace; for reward, utter spoil and ruin. But if this taking upon me the name of governor is so evil taken as it hath deserved dishonour, discredit, disfavour, with all griefs that may be laid upon a man, I must receive it as deserved of God and not of my Queen, whom I have revered with all humility, and whom I have loved with all fidelity."

This was the true way, no doubt, to reach the heart of Elizabeth, and Leicester had always plenty of such shafts in his quiver. Unfortunately he had delayed too long, and even now he dared not take a direct aim. He feared to write to the Queen herself, thinking that his so doing, "while she had such conceits of him, would only trouble her," and he therefore continued to employ the Lord-Treasurer and Mr. Secretary as his mediators. Thus he committed error upon error.

Meantime, as if there had not been procrastination enough, Davison was loitering at the Brill, detained by wind and weather. Two days after the letter, just cited, had been despatched to Walsingham, Leicester sent an impatient message to the envoy. "I am heartily sorry, with all my heart," he said, "to hear of your long stay at Brill, the wind serving so fair as it hath done these two days. I would have laid any wager that you had been in England ere this. I pray you make haste, lest our cause take too great a prejudice there ere you come, although I cannot fear it, because it is so good and honest. I pray you imagine in what care I dwell till I shall hear from you, albeit some way very resolute."



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Thus it was obvious that he had no secret despair of his cause when it should be thoroughly laid before the Queen. The wonder was that he had added the offence of long silence to the sin of disobedience. Davison had sailed, however, before the receipt of the Earl's letter. He had been furnished with careful instructions upon the subject of his mission. He was to show how eager the States had been to have Leicester for their absolute governor—which was perfectly true—and how anxious the Earl had been to decline the proffered honour—which was certainly false, if contemporary record and the minutes of the States-General are to be believed. He was to sketch the general confusion which had descended upon the country, the quarrelling of politicians, and the discontent of officers and soldiers, from out of all which chaos one of two results was sure to arise: the erection of a single chieftain, or a reconciliation of the Provinces with Spain. That it would be impossible for the Earl to exercise the double functions with which he was charged—of general of her Majesty's forces, and general and chief counsellor of the States—if any other man than himself should be appointed governor; was obvious. It was equally plain that the Provinces could only be kept at her Majesty's disposition by choosing the course which, at their own suggestion, had been adopted. The offer of the government by the States, and its acceptance by the Earl, were the logical consequence of the step which the Queen had already taken. It was thus only that England could retain her hold upon the country, and even upon the cautionary towns. As to a reconciliation of the Provinces with Spain—which would have been the probable result of Leicester's rejection of the proposition made by the State—it was unnecessary to do more than allude to such a catastrophe. No one but a madman could doubt that, in such an event, the subjugation of England was almost certain.

But before the arrival of the ambassador, the Queen had been thoroughly informed as to the whole extent of the Earl's delinquency. Dire was the result. The wintry gales which had been lashing the North Sea, and preventing the unfortunate Davison from setting forth on his disastrous mission, were nothing to the tempest of royal wrath which had been shaking the court-world to its centre. The Queen had been swearing most fearfully ever since she read the news, which Leicester had not dared to communicate directly, to herself. No one was allowed to speak a word in extenuation of the favourite's offence. Burghley, who lifted up his voice somewhat feebly to appease her wrath, was bid, with a curse, to hold his peace. So he took to his bed—partly from prudence, partly from gout—and thus sheltered himself for a season from the peltings of the storm. Walsingham, more manful, stood to his post, but could not gain a hearing. It was the culprit that should have spoken, and spoken in time. "Why, why did you not write yourself?" was the plaintive cry of all the Earl's friends, from highest to humblest. "But write to her now," they exclaimed, "at any rate; and, above all, send her a present, a love-gift." "Lay out two or three hundred crowns in some rare thing, for a token to her Majesty," said Christopher Hatton.



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Strange that his colleagues and his rivals should have been obliged to advise Leicester upon the proper course to pursue; that they—not himself—should have been the first to perceive that it was the enraged woman, even more than the offended sovereign, who was to be propitiated and soothed. In truth, all the woman had been aroused in Elizabeth's bosom. She was displeased that her favourite should derive power and splendour from any source but her own bounty. She was furious that his wife, whom she hated, was about to share in his honours. For the mischievous tongues of court-ladies had been collecting or fabricating many unpleasant rumours. A swarm of idle but piquant stories had been buzzing about the Queen's ears, and stinging her into a frenzy of jealousy. The Countess—it was said—was on the point of setting forth for the Netherlands, to join the Earl, with a train of courtiers and ladies, coaches and side-saddles, such as were never seen before—where the two were about to establish themselves in conjugal felicity, as well as almost royal state. What a prospect for the jealous and imperious sovereign! "Coaches and side-saddles! She would show the upstarts that there was one Queen, and that her name was Elizabeth, and that there was no court but hers." And so she continued to storm and swear, and threaten unutterable vengeance, till all her courtiers quaked in their shoes.

Thomas Dudley, however, warmly contradicted the report, declaring, of his own knowledge, that the Countess had no wish to go to the Provinces, nor the Earl any intention of receiving her there. This information was at once conveyed to the Queen, "and," said Dudley, "it did greatly pacify her stomach." His friends did what they could to maintain the governor's cause; but Burghley, Walsingham, Hatton, and the rest of them, were all "at their wits end," and were nearly distraught at the delay in Davison's arrival. Meantime the Queen's stomach was not so much pacified but that she was determined to humiliate the Earl with the least possible delay. Having waited sufficiently long for his explanations, she now appointed Sir Thomas Heneage as special commissioner to the States, without waiting any longer. Her wrath vented itself at once in the preamble to the instructions for this agent.

"Whereas," she said, "we have been given to understand that the Earl of Leicester hath in a very contemptuous sort—contrary to our express commandment given unto him by ourself, accepted of an offer of a more absolute government made by the States unto him, than was agreed on between us and their commissioners—which kind of contemptible manner of proceeding giveth the world just cause to think that there is not that reverent respect carried towards us by our subjects as in duty appertaineth; especially seeing so notorious a contempt committed by one whom we have raised up and yielded in the eye of the world, even from the beginning of our reign, as great portion of our favour as ever subject



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enjoyed at any prince's hands; we therefore, holding nothing dearer than our honour, and considering that no one thing could more touch our reputation than to induce so open and public a faction of a prince, and work a greater reproach than contempt at a subject's hand, without reparation of our honour, have found it necessary to send you unto him, as well to charge him with the said contempt, as also to execute such other things as we think meet to be done, for the justifying of ourselves to the world, as the repairing of the indignity cast upon us by his undutiful manner of proceeding towards us . . . . . And for that we find ourselves also not well dealt withal by the States, in that they have pressed the said Earl, without our assent or privity, to accept of a more absolute government than was agreed on between us and their commissioners, we have also thought meet that you shall charge them therewith, according to the directions hereafter ensuing. And to the end there may be no delay used in the execution of that which we think meet to be presently done, you shall charge the said States, even as they tender the continuance of our good-will towards them, to proceed to the speedy execution of our request."

After this trumpet-like preamble it may be supposed that the blast which followed would be piercing and shrill. The instructions, in truth, consisted in wild, scornful flourishes upon one theme. The word contempt had occurred five times in the brief preamble. It was repeated in almost every line of the instructions.

"You shall let the Earl" (our cousin no longer) "understand," said the Queen, "how highly and justly we are offended with his acceptation of the government, which we do repute to be a very great and strange contempt, least looked for at our hands, being, as he is, a creature of our own." His omission to acquaint her by letter with the causes moving him "so contemptuously to break" her commandment, his delay in sending Davison "to answer the said contempt," had much "aggravated the fault," although the Queen protested herself unable to imagine any "excuse for so manifest a contempt." The States were to be informed that she "held it strange" that "this creature of her own" should have been pressed by them to "commit so notorious a contempt" against her, both on account of this very exhibition of contempt on Leicester's part, and because they thereby "shewed themselves to have a very slender and weak conceit of her judgment, by pressing a minister of hers to accept that which she had refused, as: though her long experience in government had not taught her to discover what was fit to do in matters of state." As the result of such a proceeding would be to disgrace her in the eyes of mankind, by inducing an opinion that her published solemn declaration on this great subject had been intended to abuse the world, he was directed—in order to remove the hard conceit justly to be taken by the world, "in consideration of the said contempt,"—to make a public and open resignation of the government in the place where he had accepted the same.



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Thus it had been made obvious to the unlucky “creature of her own,” that the Queen did not easily digest “contempt.” Nevertheless these instructions to Heneage were gentle, compared with the fierce billet which she addressed directly to the Earl: It was brief, too, as the posy of a ring; and thus it ran: “To my Lord of Leicester, from the Queen, by Sir Thomas Heneage. How contemptuously we conceive ourself to have been used by you, you shall by this bearer understand, whom we have expressly sent unto you to charge you withal. We could never have imagined, had we not seen it fall out in experience, that a man raised up by ourself, and extraordinarily favoured by us above any other subject of this land, would have, in so contemptible a sort, broken our commandment, in a cause that so greatly toucheth us in honour; whereof, although you have showed yourself to make but little account, in most undutiful a sort, you may not therefore think that we have so little care of the reparation thereof as we mind to pass so great a wrong in silence unredressed. And therefore our express pleasure and commandment is, that—all delays and excuses laid apart—you do presently, upon the duty of your allegiance, obey and fulfil whatsoever the bearer hereof shall direct you to do in our name. Whereof fail not, as you will answer the contrary at your uttermost peril.”

Here was no billing and cooing, certainly, but a terse, biting phraseology, about which there could be no misconception.

By the same messenger the Queen also sent a formal letter to the States-General; the epistle—‘mutatis mutandis’—being also addressed to the state-council.

In this document her Majesty expressed her great surprise that Leicester should have accepted their offer of the absolute government, “both for police and war,” when she had so expressly rejected it herself. “To tell the truth,” she observed, “you seem to have treated us with very little respect, and put a too manifest insult upon us, in presenting anew to one of, our subjects the same proposition which we had already declined, without at least waiting for our answer whether we should like it or no; as if we had not sense enough to be able to decide upon what we ought to accept or refuse.” She proceeded to express her dissatisfaction with the course pursued, because so repugnant to her published declaration, in which she had stated to the world her intention of aiding the Provinces, without meddling in the least with the sovereignty of the country. “The contrary would now be believed,” she said, “at least by those who take the liberty of censuring, according to their pleasure, the actions of princes.” Thus her honour was at stake. She signified her will, therefore, that, in order to convince the world of her sincerity, the authority conferred should be revoked, and that “the Earl,” whom she had decided to recall very soon, should, during his brief residence there, only exercise the



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power agreed upon by the original contract. She warmly reiterated her intention, however, of observing inviolably the promise of assistance which she had given to the States. "And if," she said, "any malicious or turbulent spirits should endeavour, perchance, to persuade the people that this our refusal proceeds from lack of affection or honest disposition to assist you—instead of being founded only on respect for our honour, which is dearer to us than life—we beg you, by every possible means, to shut their mouths, and prevent their pernicious designs."

Thus, heavily laden with the royal wrath, Heneage was on the point of leaving London for the Netherlands, on the very day upon which Davison arrived, charged with deprecatory missives from that country. After his long detention he had a short passage, crossing from the Brill to Margate in a single night. Coming immediately to London, he sent to Walsingham to inquire which way the wind was blowing at court, but received a somewhat discouraging reply. "Your long detention by his Lordship," said the Secretary, "has wounded the whole cause;" adding, that he thought her Majesty would not speak with him. On the other hand, it seemed indispensable for him to go to the court, because if the Queen should hear of his arrival before he had presented himself, she was likely to be more angry than ever.

So, the same afternoon, Davison waited upon Walsingham, and found him in a state of despondency. "She takes his Lordship's acceptance of the, government most haynously," said Sir Francis, "and has resolved to send Sir Thomas Heneage at once, with orders for him to resign the office. She has been threatening you and Sir Philip Sidney, whom she considers the chief actors and persuaders in the matter, according to information received from some persons about my Lord of Leicester."

Davison protested himself amazed at the Secretary's discourse, and at once took great pains to show the reasons by which all parties had been influenced in the matter of the government. He declared roundly that if the Queen should carry out her present intentions, the Earl would be most unworthily disgraced, the cause utterly overthrown, the Queen's honour perpetually stained, and that her kingdom would incur great disaster.

Directly after this brief conversation, Walsingham went up stairs to the Queen, while Davison proceeded to the apartments of Sir Christopher Hatton. Thence he was soon summoned to the royal presence, and found that he had not been misinformed as to the temper of her Majesty. The Queen was indeed in a passion, and began swearing at Davison so soon as he got into the chamber; abusing Leicester for having accepted the offer of the States, against her many times repeated commandment, and the ambassador for not having opposed his course. The thing had been done, she said, in contempt of her, as if her consent had been of no consequence, or as if the matter in no way concerned her.



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So soon as she paused to take breath, the envoy modestly, but firmly, appealed to her reason, that she would at any rate lend him a patient and favourable ear, in which case he doubted not that she would form a more favourable opinion of the case than she had hitherto done: He then entered into a long discourse upon the state of the Netherlands before the arrival of Leicester, the inclination in many quarters for a peace, the “despair that any sound and good fruit would grow of her Majesty’s cold beginning,” the general unpopularity of the States’ government, the “corruption, partiality, and confusion,” which were visible everywhere, the perilous condition of the whole cause, and the absolute necessity of some immediate reform.

“It was necessary,” said Davison, “that some one person of wisdom and authority should take the helm. Among the Netherlanders none was qualified for such a charge. Lord Maurice is a child, poor, and of but little respect among them. Elector Truchsess, Count Hohenlo, Meurs, and the rest, strangers and incapable of the burden. These considerations influenced the States to the step which had been taken; without which all the rest of her benevolence was to little purpose.” Although the contract between the commissioners and the Queen had not literally provided for such an arrangement, yet it had always been contemplated by the States, who had left themselves without a head until the arrival of the Earl.

“Under one pretext or another,” continued the envoy, “my Lord of Leicester had long delayed to satisfy them,”—(and in so stating he went somewhat further in defence of his absent friend than the facts would warrant), “for he neither flatly refused it, nor was willing to accept, until your Majesty’s pleasure should be known.” Certainly the records show no reservation of his acceptance until the Queen had been consulted; but the defence by Davison of the offending Earl was so much the more courageous.

“At length, wearied by their importunity, moved with their reasons, and compelled by necessity, he thought it better to take the course he did,” proceeded the diplomatist, “for otherwise he must have been an eye-witness of the dismemberment of the whole country, which could not be kept together but by a reposed hope in her Majesty’s found favour, which had been utterly despaired of by his refusal. He thought it better by accepting to increase the honour, profit; and surety, of her Majesty, and the good of the cause, than, by refusing, to utterly hazard the one, and overthrow the other.”

To all this and more, well and warmly urged by Davison; the Queen listened by fits and starts, often interrupting his discourse by violent abuse of Leicester, accusing him of contempt for her, charging him with thinking more of his own particular greatness than of her honour and service, and then “digressing into old griefs,” said the envoy, “too long and tedious to write.” She vehemently denounced Davison also for dereliction

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of duty in not opposing the measure; but he manfully declared that he never deemed so meanly of her Majesty or of his Lordship as to suppose that she would send him, or that he would go to the Provinces, merely," to take command of the relics of Mr. Norris's worn and decayed troops." Such a change, protested Davison, was utterly unworthy a person of the Earl's quality, and utterly unsuited to the necessity of the time and state.

But Davison went farther in defence of Leicester. He had been present at many of the conferences with the Netherland envoys during the preceding summer in England, and he now told the Queen stoutly to her face that she herself, or at any rate one of her chief counsellors, in her hearing and his, had expressed her royal determination not to prevent the acceptance of whatever authority the states might choose to confer, by any one whom she might choose to send. She had declined to accept it in person, but she had been willing that it should be wielded by her deputy; and this remembrance of his had been confirmed by that of one of the commissioners since their return. She had never—Davison maintained—sent him one single line having any bearing on the subject. Under such circumstances, "I might have been accused of madness," said he, "to have dissuaded an action in my poor opinion so necessary and expedient for your Majesty's honour, surety, and greatness." If it were to do over again, he avowed, and "were his opinion demanded, he could give no other advice than that which he had given, having received no contrary, commandment from her Highness."

And so ended the first evening's long and vehement debate, and Davison departed, "leaving her," as he said, "much qualified, though in many points unsatisfied." She had however, absolutely refused to receive a letter from Leicester, with which he had been charged, but which, in her opinion, had better have been written two months before.

The next day, it seemed, after all, that Heneage was to be despatched, "in great heat," upon his mission. Davison accordingly requested an immediate audience. So soon as admitted to the presence he burst into tears, and implored the Queen to pause before she should inflict the contemplated disgrace on one whom she had hitherto so highly esteemed, and, by so doing, dishonour herself and imperil both countries. But the Queen was more furious than ever that morning, returning at every pause in the envoy's discourse to harp upon the one string—"How dared he come to such a decision without at least imparting it to me?"—and so on, as so many times before. And again Davison, with all the eloquence and with every soothing art he had at command; essayed to pour oil upon the waves. Nor was he entirely unsuccessful; for presently the Queen became so calm again that he ventured once more to present the rejected letter of the Earl. She broke the seal, and at sight of the well-known handwriting she became still more gentle; and so soon as she had read the first of her favourite's honied phrases she thrust the precious document into her pocket, in order to read it afterwards, as Davison observed, at her leisure.



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The opening thus successfully made, and the envoy having thus, “by many insinuations,” prepared her to lend him a “more patient and willing ear than she had vouchsafed before,” he again entered into a skilful and impassioned argument to show the entire wisdom of the course pursued by the Earl.

It is unnecessary to repeat the conversation. Since to say that no man could have more eloquently and faithfully supported an absent friend under difficulties than Davison now defended the Earl. The line of argument is already familiar to the reader, and, in truth, the Queen had nothing to reply, save to insist upon the governor’s delinquency in maintaining so long and inexplicable a silence. And—at this thought, in spite of the envoy’s eloquence, she went off again in a paroxysm of anger, abusing the Earl, and deeply censuring Davison for his “peremptory and partial dealing.”

“I had conceived a better opinion of you,” she said, “and I had intended more good to you than I now find you worthy of.”

“I humbly thank your Highness,” replied the ambassador, “but I take yourself to witness that I have never affected or sought any such grace at your hands. And if your Majesty persists in the dangerous course on which you are now entering, I only pray your leave, in recompense for all my travails, to retire myself home, where I may spend the rest of my life in praying for you, whom Salvation itself is not able to save, if these purposes are continued. Henceforth, Madam, he is to be deemed happiest who is least interested in the public service.”

And so ended the second day’s debate. The next day the Lord-Treasurer, who, according to Davison, employed himself diligently—as did also Walsingham and Hatton—in dissuading the Queen from the violent measures which she had resolved upon, effected so much of a change as to procure the insertion of those qualifying clauses in Heneage’s instructions which had been previously disallowed. The open and public disgrace of the Earl, which was to have been peremptorily demanded, was now to be deferred, if such a measure seemed detrimental to the public service. Her Majesty, however, protested herself as deeply offended as ever, although she had consented to address a brief, somewhat mysterious, but benignant letter of compliment to the States.

Soon after this Davison retired for a few days from the court, having previously written to the Earl that “the heat of her Majesty’s offence to his Lordship was abating every day somewhat, and that she was disposed both to hear and to speak more temperately of him.”

He implored him accordingly to a “more diligent entertaining of her by wise letters and messages, wherein his slackness hitherto appeared to have bred a great part of this unkindness.” He observed also that the “traffic of peace was still going on underhand; but whether to use it as a second string to our bow, if the first should fail, or of any settled inclination thereunto, he could not affirm.”



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Meantime Sir Thomas Heneage was despatched on his mission to the States, despite all the arguments and expostulations of Walsingham, Burghley, Hatton, and Davison. All the Queen's counsellors were unequivocally in favour of sustaining Leicester; and Heneage was not a little embarrassed as to the proper method of conducting the affair. Everything, in truth, was in a most confused condition. He hardly understood to what power he was accredited. "Heneage writes even now unto me," said Walsingham to Davison, "that he cannot yet receive any information who be the States, which he thinketh will be a great maimer unto him in his negotiation. I have told him that it is an assembly much like that of our burgesses that represent the State, and that my Lord of Leicester may cause some of them to meet together, unto whom he may deliver his letters and messages." Thus the new envoy was to request the culprit to summon the very assembly by which his downfall and disgrace were to be solemnized, as formally as had been so recently his elevation to the height of power. The prospect was not an agreeable one, and the less so because of his general want of familiarity with the constitutional forms of the country he was about to visit. Davison accordingly, at the request of Sir Francis, furnished Heneage with much valuable information and advice upon the subject.

Thus provided with information, forewarned of danger, furnished with a double set of letters from the Queen to the States—the first expressed in language of extreme exasperation, the others couched in almost affectionate terms—and laden with messages brimfull of wrathful denunciation from her Majesty to one who was notoriously her Majesty's dearly-beloved, Sir Thomas Heneage set forth on his mission. These were perilous times for the Davisons and the Heneages, when even Leicesters and Burghleys were scarcely secure.

Meantime the fair weather at court could not be depended upon from one day to another, and the clouds were perpetually returning after the rain.

"Since my second and third day's audience," said Davison, "the storms I met with at my arrival have overblown and abated daily. On Saturday again she fell into some new heat, which lasted not long. This day I was myself at the court, and found her in reasonable good terms, though she will not yet seem satisfied to me either with the matter or manner of your proceeding, notwithstanding all the labour I have taken in that behalf. Yet I find not her Majesty altogether so sharp as some men look, though her favour has outwardly cooled in respect both of this action and of our plain proceeding with her here in defence thereof."

The poor Countess—whose imaginary exodus, with the long procession of coaches and side-saddles, had excited so much ire—found herself in a most distressing position. "I have not seen my Lady these ten or twelve days," said Davison. "To-morrow I hope to do my duty towards her. I found her greatly troubled with tempestuous news she received from court, but somewhat comforted when she understood how I had

proceeded with her Majesty . . . . But these passions overblown, I hope her Majesty will have a gracious regard both towards myself and the cause.”

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But the passions seemed not likely to blow over so soon as was desirable. Leicester's brother the Earl of Warwick took a most gloomy view of the whole transaction, and hoarser than the raven's was his boding tone.

"Well, our mistress's extreme rage doth increase rather than diminish," he wrote, "and she giveth out great threatening words against you. Therefore make the best assurance you can for yourself, and trust not her oath, for that her malice is great and unquenchable in the wisest of their opinions here, and as for other friendships, as far as I can learn, it is as doubtful as the other. Wherefore, my good brother, repose your whole trust in God, and He will defend you in despite of all your enemies. And let this be a great comfort to you, and so it is likewise to myself and all your assured friends, and that is, that you were never so honoured and loved in your life amongst all good people as you are at this day, only for dealing so nobly and wisely in this action as you have done; so that, whatsoever cometh of it, you have done your part. I praise God from my heart for it. Once again, have great care of yourself, I mean for your safety, and if she will needs revoke you, to the overthrowing of the cause, if I were as you, if I could not be assured there, I would go to the farthest part of Christendom rather than ever come into England again. Take heed whom you trust, for that you have some false boys about you."

And the false boys were busy enough, and seemed likely to triumph in the result of their schemes. For a glance into the secret correspondence of Mary of Scotland has already revealed the Earl to us constantly surrounded by men in masks. Many of those nearest his person, and of highest credit out of England, were his deadly foes, sworn to compass his dishonour, his confusion, and eventually his death, and in correspondence with his most powerful adversaries at home and abroad. Certainly his path was slippery and perilous along those icy summits of power, and he had need to look well to his footsteps.

Before Heneage had arrived in the Netherlands, Sir Thomas Shirley, despatched by Leicester to England with a commission to procure supplies for the famishing soldiers, and, if possible, to mitigate the Queen's wrath, had, been admitted more than once to her Majesty's presence. He had fought the Earl's battle as manfully as Davison had done, and, like that envoy, had received nothing in exchange for his plausible arguments but bitter words and big oaths. Eight days after his arrival he was introduced by Hatton into the privy chamber, and at the moment of his entrance was received with a volley of execrations.

"I did expressly and peremptorily forbid his acceptance of the absolute government, in the hearing of divers of my council," said the Queen.



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Shirley.—“The necessity of the case was imminent, your Highness. It was his Lordship’s intent to do all for your Majesty’s service. Those countries did expect him as a governor at his first landing, and the States durst do no other than satisfy the people also with that opinion. The people’s mislike of their present government is such and so great as that the name of States is grown odious amongst them. Therefore the States, doubting the furious rage of the people, conferred the authority upon his Lordship with incessant suit to him to receive it. Notwithstanding this, however, he did deny it until he saw plainly both confusion and ruin of that country if he should refuse. On the other hand, when he had seen into their estates, his lordship found great profit and commodity like to come unto your Majesty by your acceptance of it. Your Highness may now have garrisons of English in as many towns as pleaseth you, without any more charge than you are now at. Nor can any peace be made with Spain at any time hereafter, but through you: and by you. Your Majesty should remember, likewise, that if a man of another nation had been chosen governor it might have wrought great danger. Moreover it would have been an indignity that your lieutenant-general should of necessity be under him that so should have been elected. Finally, this is a stop to any other that may affect the place of government there.”

Queen (who has manifested many signs of impatience during this discourse).—“Your speech is all in vain. His Lordship’s proceeding is sufficient to make me infamous to all princes, having protested the contrary, as I have done, in a book which is translated into divers and sundry languages. His Lordship, being my servant, a creature of my own, ought not, in duty towards me, have entered into this course without my knowledge and good allowance.”

Shirley.—“But the world hath conceived a high judgment of your Majesty’s great wisdom and providence; shown by your assailing the King of Spain at one time both in the Low Countries and also by Sir Francis Drake. I do assure myself that the same judgment which did first cause you to take this in hand must continue a certain knowledge in your Majesty that one of these actions must needs stand much better by the other. If Sir Francis do prosper, then all is well. And though he should not prosper, yet this hold that his Lordship hath taken for you on the Low Countries must always assure an honourable peace at your Highness’s pleasure. I beseech your Majesty to remember that to the King of Spain the government of his Lordship is no greater matter than if he were but your lieutenant-general there; but the voyage of Sir Francis is of much greater offence than all.”

Queen (interrupting).—“I can very well answer for Sir Francis. Moreover, if need be, the gentleman careth not if I should disavow him.”



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Shirley.—“Even so standeth my Lord, if your disavowing of him may also stand with your Highness’s favour towards him. Nevertheless; should this bruit of your mislike of his Lordship’s authority there come unto the ears of those people; being a nation both sudden and suspicious, and having been heretofore used to stratagem—I fear it may work some strange notion in them, considering that, at this time, there is an increase of taxation raised upon them, the bestowing whereof perchance they know not of. His Lordship’s giving; up of the government may leave them altogether without government, and in worse case than they were ever in before. For now the authority of the States is dissolved, and his Lordship’s government is the only thing that holdeth them together. I do beseech your Highness, then, to consider well of it, and if there be any private cause for which you take grief against his Lordship, nevertheless, to have regard unto the public cause, and to have a care of your own safety, which in many wise men’s opinions, standeth much upon the good maintenance and upholding of this matter.”

Queen.—“I believe nothing of, what you say concerning the dissolving of the authority of the States. I know well enough that the States do remain states still. I mean not to do harm to the cause, but only to reform that which his Lordship hath done beyond his warrant from me.”

And with this the Queen swept suddenly from the apartment. Sir Thomas, at different stages of the conversation, had in vain besought her to accept a letter from the Earl which had been entrusted to his care. She obstinately refused to touch it. Shirley had even had recourse to stratagem: affecting ignorance on many points concerning which the Queen desired information, and suggesting that doubtless she would find those matters fully explained in his Lordship’s letter. The artifice was in vain, and the discussion was, on the whole, unsatisfactory. Yet there is no doubt that the Queen had had the worst of the argument, and she was far too sagacious a politician not to feel the weight of that which had been urged so often in defence of the course pursued. But it was with her partly a matter of temper and offended pride, perhaps even of wounded affection.

On the following morning Shirley saw the Queen walking in the garden of the palace, and made bold to accost her. Thinking, as he said, “to test her affection to Lord Leicester by another means,” the artful Sir Thomas stepped up to her, and observed that his Lordship was seriously ill. “It is feared,” he said, “that the Earl is again attacked by the disease of which Dr. Goodrowse did once cure him. Wherefore his Lordship is now a humble suitor to your Highness that it would please you to spare Goodrowse, and give him leave to go thither for some time.”

The Queen was instantly touched.

“Certainly—with all my heart, with all my heart, he shall have him,” she replied, “and sorry I am that his Lordship hath that need of him.”



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“And indeed,” returned sly Sir Thomas, “your Highness is a very gracious prince, who are pleased not to suffer his Lordship to perish in health, though otherwise you remain deeply offended with him.”

“You know my mind,” returned Elizabeth, now all the queen again, and perhaps suspecting the trick; “I may not endure that any man should alter my commission and the authority that I gave him, upon his own fancies and without me.”

With this she instantly summoned one of her gentlemen, in order to break off the interview, fearing that Shirley was about to enter again upon a discussion of the whole subject, and again to attempt the delivery of the Earl’s letter.

In all this there was much of superannuated coquetry, no doubt, and much of Tudor despotism, but there was also a strong infusion of artifice. For it will soon be necessary to direct attention to certain secret transactions of an important nature in which the Queen was engaged, and which were even hidden from the all-seeing eye of Walsingham—although shrewdly suspected both by that statesman and by Leicester—but which were most influential in modifying her policy at that moment towards the Netherlands.

There could be no doubt, however, of the stanch and strenuous manner in which the delinquent Earl was supported by his confidential messengers and by some of his fellow-councillors. His true friends were urgent that the great cause in which he was engaged should be forwarded sincerely and without delay. Shirley had been sent for money; but to draw money from Elizabeth was like coining her life-blood, drachma by drachma.

“Your Lordship is like to have but a poor supply of money at this time,” said Sir Thomas. “To be plain with you, I fear she groweth weary of the charge, and will hardly be brought to deal thoroughly in the action.”

He was also more explicit than he might have been—had he been better informed as to the disposition of the chief personages of the court, concerning whose temper the absent Earl was naturally anxious. Hatton was most in favour at the moment, and it was through Hatton that the communications upon Netherland matters passed; “for,” said Shirley, “she will hardly endure Mr. Secretary (Walsingham) to speak unto her therein.”

“And truly, my Lord,” he continued, “as Mr. Secretary is a noble, good, and true friend unto you, so doth Mr. Vice-Chamberlain show himself an honourable, true, and faithful gentleman, and doth carefully and most like a good friend for your Lordship.”

And thus very succinctly and graphically had the envoy painted the situation to his principal. “Your Lordship now sees things just as they stand,” he moralized. “Your



Lordship is exceeding wise. You know the Queen and her nature best of any man. You know all men here. Your Lordship can judge the sequel by this that you see: only this I must tell your Lordship, I perceive that fears and doubts from thence are like to work better effects here than comforts and assurance. I think it my part to send your Lordship this as it is, rather than to be silent.”

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And with these rather ominous insinuations the envoy concluded for the time his narrative.

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