

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1586b eBook

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1586b by John Lothrop Motley

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

By John Lothrop Motley

MOTLEY'S HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS, Project Gutenberg Edition, Volume 45

History United Netherlands, Volume 45, 1586

CHAPTER VII., Part 2.

Leicester's Letters to his Friends—Paltry Conduct of the Earl to Davison—He excuses himself at Davison's Expense—His Letter to Burghley—Effect of the Queen's Letters to the States—Suspicion and Discontent in Holland—States excuse their Conduct to the Queen—Leicester discredited in Holland—Evil Consequences to Holland and England—Magic: Effect of a Letter from Leicester—The Queen appeased—Her Letters to the States and the Earl—She permits the granted Authority—Unhappy Results of the Queen's Course—Her variable Moods—She attempts to deceive Walsingham—Her Injustice to Heneage—His Perplexity and Distress—Humiliating Position of Leicester—His melancholy Letters to the Queen—He receives a little Consolation—And writes



more cheerfully—The Queen is more benignant—The States less contented than the Earl—His Quarrels with them begin.

While these storms were blowing and “overblowing” in England, Leicester remained greatly embarrassed and anxious in Holland. He had sown the wind more extensively than he had dreamed of when accepting the government, and he was now awaiting, with much trepidation, the usual harvest: And we have seen that it was rapidly ripening. Meantime, the good which he had really effected in the Provinces by the course he had taken was likely to be neutralized by the sinister rumours as to his impending disgrace, while the enemy was proportionally encouraged. “I understand credibly,” he said, “that the Prince of Parma feels himself in great jollity that her Majesty doth rather mislike than allow of our doings here, which; if it be true, let her be sure her own sweet self shall first smart.”



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Moreover; the English troops were, as we have seen, mere shoeless, shivering, starving vagabonds. The Earl had generously advanced very large sums of money from his own pocket to relieve their necessity. The States, on the other hand, had voluntarily increased the monthly contribution of 200,000 florins, to which their contract with Elizabeth obliged them, and were more disposed than ever they had been since the death of Orange to proceed vigorously and harmoniously against the common enemy of Christendom. Under such circumstances it may well be imagined that there was cause on Leicester's part for deep mortification at the tragical turn which the Queen's temper seemed to be taking.

"I know not," he said, "how her Majesty doth mean to dispose of me. It hath grieved me more than I can express that for faithful and good service she should so deeply conceive against me. God knows with what mind I have served her Highness, and perhaps some others might have failed. Yet she is neither tied one jot by covenant or promise by me in any way, nor at one groat the more charges, but myself two or three thousand pounds sterling more than now is like to be well spent. I will desire no partial speech in my favour. If my doings be ill for her Majesty and the realm, let me feel the smart of it. The cause is now well forward; let not her majesty suffer it to quail. If you will have it proceed to good effect, send away Sir William Pelham with all the haste you can. I mean not to complain, but with so weighty a cause as this is, few men have been so weakly assisted. Her Majesty hath far better choice for my place, and with any that may succeed me let Sir William Pelham be first that may come. I speak from my soul for her Majesty's service. I am for myself upon an hour's warning to obey her good pleasure."

Thus far the Earl had maintained his dignity. He had yielded to the solicitations of the States, and had thereby exceeded his commission, and gratified his ambition, but he had in no wise forfeited his self-respect. But—so soon as the first unquestionable intelligence of the passion to which the Queen had given way at his misdoings reached him—he began to whimper, The straightforward tone which Davison had adopted in his interviews with Elizabeth, and the firmness with which he had defended the cause of his absent friend, at a moment when he had plunged himself into disgrace, was worthy of applause. He deserved at least a word of honest thanks.

Ignoble however was the demeanor of the Earl towards the man—for whom he had but recently been unable to invent eulogies sufficiently warm— so soon as he conceived the possibility of sacrificing his friend as the scape-goat for his own fault. An honest schoolboy would have scorned to leave thus in the lurch a comrade who had been fighting his battles so honestly.



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“How earnest I was,” he wrote to the lords of the council, 9th March, 1586, “not only to acquaint her Majesty, but immediately upon the first motion made by the States, to send Mr. Davison over to her with letters, I doubt not but he will truly affirm for me; yea, and how far against my will it was, notwithstanding any reasons delivered me, that he and others persisted in, to have me accept first of this place The extremity of the case, and my being persuaded that Mr. Davison might have better satisfied her Majesty, than I perceive he can, caused, me—neither arrogantly nor contemptuously, but even merely and faithfully—to do her Majesty the best service.”

He acknowledged, certainly, that Davison had been influenced by honest motives, although his importunities had been the real cause of the Earl’s neglect of his own obligations. But he protested that he had himself, only erred through an excessive pliancy to the will of others. “My yielding was my own fault,” he admitted, “whatsoever his persuasions; but far from a contemptuous heart, or else God pluck out both heart and bowels with utter shame.”

So soon as Sir Thomas Heneage had presented himself, and revealed the full extent of the Queen’s wrath, the Earl’s disposition to cast the whole crime on the shoulders of Davison became quite undisguised.

“I thank you for your letters,” wrote Leicester to Walsingham, “though you can send me no comfort. Her Majesty doth deal hardly to believe so ill of me. It is true I faulted, but she doth not consider what commodities she hath withal, and herself no way engaged for it, as Mr. Davison might have better declared it, if it had pleased him. And I must thank him only for my blame, and so he will confess to you, for, I protest before God, no necessity here could have made me leave her Majesty unacquainted with the cause before I would have accepted of it, but only his so earnest pressing me with his faithful assured promise to discharge me, however her Majesty should take it. For you all see there she had no other cause to be offended but this, and, by the Lord, he was the only cause; albeit it is no sufficient allegation, being as I am He had, I think, saved all to have told her, as he promised me. But now it is laid upon me, God send the cause to take no harm, my grief must be the less.

“How far Mr. Heneage’s commission shall deface me I know not. He is wary to observe his commission, and I consent withal. I know the time will be her Majesty will be sorry for it. In the meantime I am too, too weary of the high dignity. I would that any that could serve her Majesty were placed in it, and I to sit down with all my losses.”

In more manful strain he then alluded to the sufferings of his army. “Whatsoever become of me,” he said, “give me leave to speak for the poor soldiers. If they be not better maintained, being in this strange country, there will be neither good service done, nor be without great dishonour to her Majesty Well, you see the wants, and it is one cause that will glad me to be rid of this heavy high calling, and wish me at my poor cottage again, if any I shall find. But let her Majesty pay them well, and appoint such a

man as Sir William Pelham to govern them, and she never wan more honour than these men here will do, I am persuaded.”

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That the Earl was warmly urged by all most conversant with Netherland politics to assume the government was a fact admitted by all. That he manifested rather eagerness than reluctance on the subject, and that his only hesitation arose from the proposed restraints upon the power, not from scruples about accepting the power, are facts upon record. There is nothing save his own assertion to show any backwardness on his part to snatch the coveted prize; and that assertion was flatly denied by Davison, and was indeed refuted by every circumstance in the case. It is certain that he had concealed from Davison the previous prohibitions of the Queen. He could anticipate much better than could Davison, therefore, the probable indignation of the Queen. It is strange then that he should have shut his eyes to it so wilfully, and stranger still that he should have relied on the envoy's eloquence instead of his own to mitigate that emotion. Had he placed his defence simply upon its true basis, the necessity of the case, and the impossibility of carrying out the Queen's intentions in any other way, it would be difficult to censure him; but that he should seek to screen himself by laying the whole blame on a subordinate, was enough to make any honest man who heard him hang his head. "I meant not to do it, but Davison told me to do it, please your Majesty, and if there was naughtiness in it, he said he would make it all right with your Majesty." Such, reduced to its simplest expression, was the defence of the magnificent Earl of Leicester.

And as he had gone cringing and whining to his royal mistress, so it was natural that he should be brutal and blustering to his friend.

"By your means," said he, "I have fallen into her Majesty's deep displeasure If you had delivered to her the truth of my dealing, her Highness never could have conceived, as I perceive she doth Nor doth her Majesty know how hardly I was drawn to accept this place before I had acquainted her—as to which you promised you would not only give her full satisfaction, but would, procure me great thanks. . . . You did chiefly persuade me to take this charge upon me You can remember how many treaties you and others had with the States, before I agreed; for all yours and their persuasion to take it You gave me assurance to satisfy her Majesty, but I see not that you have done anything I did not hide from you the doubt I had of her Majesty's ill taking it You chiefly brought me into it and it could no way have been heavy to you, though you had told the uttermost of your own doing, as you faithfully promised you would I did very unwillingly come into the matter, doubting that to fall out which is come to pass and it doth so fall out by your negligent carelessness, whereof I many hundred times told you that you would both mar the goodness of the matter, and breed me her Majesty's displeasure Thus fare you well, and except your embassages have better success, I shall have no cause to commend them."



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And so was the unfortunate Davison ground into finest dust between the upper and lower millstones of royal wrath and loyal subserviency.

Meantime the other special envoy had made his appearance in the Netherlands; the other go-between between the incensed Queen and the backsliding favourite. It has already been made sufficiently obvious, by the sketch given of his instructions, that his mission was a delicate one. In obedience to those instructions, Heneage accordingly made his appearance before the council, and, in Leicester's presence, delivered to them the severe and biting reprimand which Elizabeth had chosen to inflict upon the States and upon the governor. The envoy performed his ungracious task as daintily, as he could, and after preliminary consultation with Leicester; but the proud Earl was deeply mortified." The fourteenth day of this month of March," said he, "Sir Thomas Heneage delivered a very sharp letter from her Majesty to the council of estate, besides his message—myself being, present, for so was her Majesty's pleasure, as he said, and I do think he did but as he was commanded. How great a grief it must be to an honest heart and a true, faithful servant, before his own face, to a company of very wise and grave counsellors, who had conceived a marvellous opinion before of my credit with her Majesty, to be charged now with a manifest and wilful contempt! Matter enough to have broken any man's heart, that looked rather for thanks, as God doth know I did when I first heard of Mr. Heneage's arrival—I must say to your Lordship, for discharge of my duty, I can be no fit man to serve here—my disgrace is too great—protesting to you that since that day I cannot find it in my heart to come into that place, where, by my own sufferings torn, I was made to be thought so lewd a person."

He then comforted himself—as he had a right to do—with the reflection that this disgrace inflicted was more than he deserved, and that such would be the opinion of those by whom he was surrounded.

"Albeit one thing," he said, "did greatly comfort me, that they all best knew the wrong was great I had, and that her Majesty was very wrongfully informed of the state of my cause. I doubt not but they can and will discharge me, howsoever they shall satisfy her Majesty. And as I would rather wish for death than justly to deserve her displeasure; so, good my Lord, this disgrace not coming for any ill service to her, pray procure me a speedy resolution, that I may go hide me and pray for her. My heart is broken, though thus far I can quiet myself, that I know I have done her Majesty as faithful and good service in these countries as ever she had done her since she was Queen of England . . . Under correction, my good Lord, I have had Halifax law—to be condemned first and inquired upon after. I pray God that no man find this measure that I have done, and deserved no worse."

He defended himself—as Davison had already defended him—upon the necessities of the case.



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“I, a poor gentleman,” he said, “who have wholly depended upon herself alone—and now, being commanded to a service of the greatest importance that ever her Majesty employed any servant in, and finding the occasion so serving me, and the necessity of time such as would not permit such delays, flatly seeing that if that opportunity were lost, the like again for her service and the good of the realm was never, to be looked for, presuming upon the favour of my prince, as many servants have done, exceeding somewhat thereupon, rather than breaking any part of my commission, taking upon me a place whereby I found these whole countries could be held at her best devotion, without binding her Majesty to any such matter as she had forbidden to the States before finding, I say, both the time and opportunity to serve, and no lack but to trust to her gracious acceptance, I now feel that how good, how honourable, how profitable soever it be, it is turned to a worse part than if I had broken all her commissions and commandments, to the greatest harm, and dishonour, and danger, that may be imagined against her person, state, and dignity.”

He protested, not without a show of reason, that he was like to be worse punished “for well-doing than any man that had committed a most heinous or traitorous offence,” and he maintained that if he had not accepted the government, as he had done, “the whole State had been gone and wholly lost.” All this—as we have seen—had already been stoutly urged by Davison, in the very face of the tempest, but with no result, except to gain the enmity of both parties to the quarrel. The ungrateful Leicester now expressed confidence that the second go-between would be more adroit than the first had proved. “The causes why,” said he, “Mr. Davison could have told—no man better—but Mr. Heneage can now tell, who hath sought to the uttermost the bottom of all things. I will stand to his report, whether glory or vain desire of title caused me to step one foot forward in the matter. My place was great enough and high enough before, with much less trouble than by this, besides the great indignation of her Majesty If I had overslipt the good occasion then in danger, I had been worthy to be hanged, and to be taken for a most lewd servant to her Majesty, and a dishonest wretch to my country.”

But diligently as Heneage had sought to the bottom of all things, he had not gained the approbation of Sidney. Sir Philip thought that the new man had only ill botched a piece of work that had been most awkwardly contrived from the beginning. “Sir Thomas Heneage,” said he, “hath with as much honesty, in my opinion done as much hurt as any man this twelve-month hath done with naughtiness. But I hope in God, when her Majesty finds the truth of things, her graciousness will not utterly overthrow a cause so behooveful and costly unto her.”

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He briefly warned the government that most disastrous effects were likely to ensue, if the Earl should be publicly disgraced, and the recent action of the States reversed. The penny-wise economy, too, of the Queen, was rapidly proving a most ruinous extravagance. "I only cry for Flushing;" said Sidney, "but, unless the monies be sent over, there will some terrible accident follow, particularly to the cautionary towns, if her Majesty mean to have them cautions."

The effect produced by the first explosion of the Queen's wrath was indeed one of universal suspicion and distrust. The greatest care had been taken, however, that the affair should be delicately handled, for Heneage, while, doing as much hurt by honesty as, others by naughtiness, had modified his course as much as he dared in deference to the opinions of the Earl himself, and that of his English counsellors. The great culprit himself, assisted by his two lawyers, Clerk and Killigrew—had himself drawn the bill of his own indictment. The letters of the Queen to the States, to the council, and to the Earl himself, were, of necessity, delivered, but the reprimand which Heneage had been instructed to fulminate was made as harmless as possible. It was arranged that he should make a speech before the council; but abstain from a protocol. The oration was duly pronounced, and it was, of necessity, stinging. Otherwise the disobedience to the Queen, would have been flagrant. But the pain inflicted was to disappear with the first castigation. The humiliation was to be public and solemn, but it was not to be placed on perpetual record.

"We thought best," said Leicester, Heneage, Clerk, and Killigrew—"In according to her Majesty's secret instructions—to take that course which might least endanger the weak estate of the Provinces—that is to say, to utter so much in words as we hoped might satisfy her excellent Majesty's expectation, and yet leave them nothing in writing to confirm that which was secretly spread in many places to the hindrance of the good course of settling these affairs. Which speech, after Sir Thomas Heneage had devised, and we both perused and allowed, he, by our consent and advice, pronounced to the council of state. This we did think needful—especially because every one of the council that was present at the reading of her Majesty's first letters, was of the full mind, that if her Majesty should again show the least dislike of the present government, or should not by her next letters confirm it, they, were all undone—for that every man would cast with himself which way to make his peace."

Thus adroitly had the "poor gentleman, who could not find it in his heart to come again into the place, where—by his own sufferings torn—he was made to appear so lewd a person"—provided that there should remain no trace of that lewdness and of his sovereign's displeasure, upon the record of the States. It was not long, too, before the Earl was enabled to surmount his mortification; but the end was not yet.



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The universal suspicion, consequent on these proceedings, grew most painful. It pointed to one invariable quarter. It was believed by all that the Queen was privately treating for peace, and that the transaction was kept a secret not only from the States but from her own most trusted counsellors also. It would be difficult to exaggerate the pernicious effects of this suspicion. Whether it was a well-grounded one or not, will be shown in a subsequent chapter, but there is no doubt that the vigour of the enterprise was thus sapped at a most critical moment. The Provinces had never been more heartily banded together since the fatal 10th of July, 1584, than they were in the early spring of 1586. They were rapidly organizing their own army, and, if the Queen had manifested more sympathy with her own starving troops, the united Englishmen and Hollanders would have been invincible even by Alexander Farnese.

Moreover, they had sent out nine war-vessels to cruise off the Cape Verd Islands for the homeward-bound Spanish treasure fleet from America, with orders, if they missed it, to proceed to the West Indies; so that, said Leicester, "the King of Spain will have enough to do between these men and Drake." All parties had united in conferring a generous amount of power upon the Earl, who was, in truth, stadholder-general, under grant from the States—and both Leicester and the Provinces themselves were eager and earnest for the war. In war alone lay the salvation of England and Holland. Peace was an impossibility. It seemed to the most experienced statesmen of both countries even an absurdity. It may well be imagined, therefore, that the idea of an underhand negotiation by Elizabeth would cause a frenzy in the Netherlands. In Leicester's opinion, nothing short of a general massacre of the English would be the probable consequence. "No doubt," said he, "the very way it is to put us all to the sword here. For mine own part it would be happiest for me, though I wish and trust to lose my life in better sort."

Champagny, however, was giving out mysterious hints that the King of Spain could have peace with England when he wished for it. Sir Thomas Cecil, son of Lord Burghley, on whose countenance the States especially relied, was returning on sick-leave from his government of the Brill, and this sudden departure of so eminent a personage, joined with the public disavowal of the recent transaction between Leicester and the Provinces, was producing a general and most sickening apprehension as to the Queen's good faith. The Earl did not fail to urge these matters most warmly on the consideration of the English council, setting forth that the States were stanch for the war, but that they would be beforehand with her if she attempted by underhand means to compass a peace. "If these men once smell any such matter," wrote Leicester to Burghley, "be you sure they will soon come before you, to the utter overthrow of her Majesty and state for ever."



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The Earl was suspecting the “false boys,” by whom he was surrounded, although it was impossible for him to perceive, as we have been enabled to do, the wide-spread and intricate meshes by which he was enveloped. “Your Papists in England,” said he, “have sent over word to some in this company, that all that they ever hoped for is come to pass; that my Lord of Leicester shall be called away in greatest indignation with her Majesty, and to confirm this of Champagny, I have myself seen a letter that her Majesty is in hand with a secret peace. God forbid! for if it be so, her Majesty, her realm, and we, are all undone.”

The feeling in the Provinces was still sincerely loyal towards England. “These men,” said Leicester, “yet honour and most dearly love her Majesty, and hardly, I know, will be brought to believe ill of her any way.” Nevertheless these rumours, to the discredit of her good faith, were doing infinite harm; while the Earl, although keeping his eyes and ears wide open, was anxious not to compromise himself any further with his sovereign, by appearing himself to suspect her of duplicity. “Good, my Lord,” he besought Burghley, “do not let her Majesty know of this concerning Champagny as coming from me, for she will think it is done for my own cause, which, by the Lord God, it is not, but even on the necessity of the case for her own safety, and the realm, and us all. Good my Lord, as you will do any good in the matter, let not her Majesty understand any piece of it to come from me.”

The States-General, on the 25th March, N.S., addressed a respectful letter to the Queen, in reply to her vehement chidings. They expressed their deep regret that her Majesty should be so offended with the election of the Earl of Leicester as absolute governor.

They confessed that she had just cause of displeasure, but hoped that when she should be informed of the whole matter she would rest better satisfied with their proceedings. They stated that the authority was the same which had been previously bestowed upon governors-general; observing that by the word “absolute,” which had been used in designation of that authority, nothing more had been intended than to give to the Earl full power to execute his commission, while the sovereignty of the country was reserved to the people. This commission, they said, could not be without danger revoked. And therefore they most humbly besought her Majesty to approve what had been done, and to remember its conformity with her own advice to them, that a multitude of heads, whereby confusion in the government is bred, should be avoided.

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Leicester, upon the same occasion, addressed a letter to Burghley and Walsingham, expressing himself as became a crushed and contrite man, never more to raise his drooping head again, but warmly and manfully urging upon the attention of the English government—for the honour and interest of the Queen herself—“the miserable state of the poor soldiers.” The necessity of immediate remittances in order to keep them from starving, was most imperious. For himself, he was smothering his wretchedness until he should learn her Majesty’s final decision, as to what was to become of him. “Meantime,” said he, “I carry my grief inward, and will proceed till her Majesty’s full pleasure come with as little discouragement to the cause as I can. I pray God her Majesty may do that may be best for herself. For my own part my heart is broken, but not by the enemy.”

There is no doubt that the public disgrace thus inflicted upon the broken-hearted governor, and the severe censure administered to the States by the Queen were both ill-timed and undeserved. Whatever his disingenuousness towards Davison, whatever his disobedience to Elizabeth, however ambitious his own secret motives may, have been, there is no doubt at all that thus far he had borne himself well in his great office.

Richard Cavendish—than whom few had better opportunities of judging— spoke in strong language on the subject. “It is a thing almost incredible,” said he, “that the care and diligence of any, one man living could, in so small time; have so much repaired so disjointed and loose an estate as my Lord found this country, in. But lest he should swell in pride of that his good success, your Lordship knoweth that God hath so tempered the cause with the construction thereof, as may well hold him in good consideration of human things.” He alluded with bitterness—as did all men in the Netherlands who were not open or disguised Papists—to the fatal rumours concerning the peace-negotiation in connection with the recall of Leicester. “There be here advertisements of most fearful instance,” he said, “namely, that Champagny doth not spare most liberally to bruit abroad that he hath in his hands the conditions of peace offered by her Majesty unto the King his master, and that it is in his power to conclude at pleasure—which fearful and mischievous plot, if in time it be not met withal by some notable encounter, it cannot but prove the root of great ruin.”

The “false boys” about Leicester were indefatigable in spreading these rumours, and in taking advantage—with the assistance of the Papists in the obedient Provinces and in England—of the disgraced condition in which the Queen had placed the favourite. Most galling to the haughty Earl—most damaging to the cause of England, Holland, and, liberty—were the tales to his discredit, which circulated on the Bourse at Antwerp, Middelburg, Amsterdam, and in all the other commercial centres. The most influential



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bankers and merchants, were assured—by a thousand chattering—but as it were invisible—tongues, that the Queen had for a long time disliked Leicester; that he was a man of no account among the statesmen of England; that he was a beggar and a bankrupt; that, if he had waited two months longer, he would have made his appearance in the Provinces with one man and one boy for his followers; that the Queen had sent him thither to be rid of him; that she never intended him to have more authority than Sir John Norris had; that she could not abide the bestowing the title of Excellency upon him, and that she had not disguised her fury at his elevation to the post of governor-general.

All who attempted a refutation of these statements were asked, with a sneer, whether her Majesty had ever written a line to him, or in commendation of him, since his arrival. Minute inquiries were made by the Dutch merchants of their commercial correspondents, both in their own country and in England, as to Leicester's real condition and character. at home. What was his rank, they asked, what his ability, what: his influence at court? Why, if he were really of so high quality as had been reported, was he thus neglected, and at last disgraced? Had he any landed property in England? Had he really ever held any other office but that of master of the horse? "And then," asked one particular busy body, who made himself very unpleasant on the Amsterdam Exchange, "why has her Majesty forbidden all noblemen and gentlemen from coming hither, as was the case at the beginning? Is it because she is hearkening to a peace? And if it be so, quoth he, we are well handled; for if her Majesty hath sent a disgraced man to amuse us, while she is secretly working a peace for herself, when we—on the contrary—had broken off all our negotiations, upon confidence of her Majesty's goodness; such conduct will be remembered to the end of the world, and the Hollanders will never abide the name of England again."

On such a bed of nettles there was small chance of repose for the governor. Some of the rumours were even more stinging. So incomprehensible did it seem that the proud sovereign of England should send over her subjects to starve or beg in the streets of Flushing and Ostend, that it was darkly intimated that Leicester had embezzled the funds, which, no doubt, had been remitted for the poor soldiers. This was the most cruel blow of all. The Earl had been put to enormous charges. His household at the Hague cost him a thousand pounds a month. He had been paying and furnishing five hundred and fifty men out of his own purse. He had also a choice regiment of cavalry, numbering seven hundred and fifty horse; three hundred and fifty of which number were over and above those allowed for by the Queen, and were entirely at his expense. He was most liberal in making presents of money to every gentleman in his employment. He had deeply mortgaged his estates in order to provide for these heavy demands

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upon him, and professed his willingness “to spend more, if he might have got any more money for his land that was left;” and in the face of such unquestionable facts—much to the credit certainly of his generosity—he was accused of swindling a Queen whom neither Jew nor Gentile had ever yet been sharp enough to swindle; while he was in reality plunging forward in a course of reckless extravagance in order to obviate the fatal effects of her penuriousness.

Yet these sinister reports were beginning to have a poisonous effect. Already an alteration of mien was perceptible in the States-General. “Some buzzing there is amongst them,” said Leicester, “whatsoever it be. They begin to deal very strangely within these few days.” Moreover the industry of the Poleys, Blunts, and Pagets, had turned these unfavourable circumstances to such good account that a mutiny had been near breaking out among the English troops. “And, before the Lord I speak it,” said the Earl, “I am sure some of these good towns had been gone ere this, but for my money. As for the States, I warrant you, they see day at a little hole. God doth know what a forward and a joyful country here was within a month. God send her Majesty to recover it so again, and to take care of it, on the condition she send me after Sir Francis Drake to the Indies, my service here being no more acceptable.”

Such was the aspect of affairs in the Provinces after the first explosion of the Queen’s anger had become known. Meanwhile the court-weather was very changeable in England, being sometimes serene, sometimes cloudy,— always treacherous.

Mr. Vavasour, sent by the Earl with despatches to her Majesty and the council, had met with a sufficiently benignant reception. She accepted the letters, which, however, owing to a bad cold with a defluxion in the eyes, she was unable at once to read; but she talked ambiguously with the messenger. Vavasour took pains to show the immediate necessity of sending supplies, so that the armies in the Netherlands might take the field at the, earliest possible moment. “And what,” said she, “if a peace should come in the mean time?”

“If your Majesty desireth a convenient peace,” replied Vavasour, “to take the field is the readiest way to obtain it; for as yet the King of Spain hath had no reason to fear you. He is daily expecting that your own slackness may give your Majesty an overthrow. Moreover, the Spaniards are soldiers, and are not to be moved by-shadows.”

But the Queen had no ears for these remonstrances, and no disposition to open her coffers. A warrant for twenty-four thousand pounds had been signed by her at the end of the month of March, and was about to be sent, when Vavasour arrived; but it was not possible for him, although assisted by the eloquence of Walsingham and Burghley, to obtain an enlargement of the pittance. “The storms are overblown,” said Walsingham,



“but I fear your Lordship shall receive very scarce measure from hence. You will not believe how the sparing humour doth increase upon us.”

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Nor were the storms so thoroughly overblown but that there were not daily indications of returning foul weather. Accordingly—after a conference with Vavasour—Burghley, and Walsingham had an interview with the Queen, in which the Lord Treasurer used bold and strong language. He protested to her that he was bound, both by his duty to himself and his oath as her councillor, to declare that the course she was holding to Lord Leicester was most dangerous to her own honour, interest and safety. If she intended to continue in this line of conduct, he begged to resign his office of Lord Treasurer; wishing; before God and man, to wash his bands of the shame and peril which he saw could not be avoided. The Queen, astonished at the audacity of Burghley's attitude and language, hardly knew whether to chide him for his presumption or to listen to his arguments. She did both. She taxed him with insolence in daring to address her so roundly, and then finding he was speaking even in 'amaritudine animae' and out of a clear conscience, she became calm again, and intimated a disposition to qualify her anger against the absent Earl.

Next day, to their sorrow, the two councillors found that the Queen had again changed her mind—"as one that had been by some adverse counsel seduced." She expressed the opinion that affairs would do well enough in the Netherlands, even though Leicester were displaced. A conference followed between Walsingham, Hatton, and Burghley, and then the three went again to her Majesty. They assured her that if she did not take immediate steps to satisfy the States and the people of the Provinces, she would lose those countries and her own honour at the same time; and that then they would prove a source of danger to her instead of protection and glory. At this she was greatly troubled, and agreed to do anything they might advise consistently with her honour. It was then agreed that Leicester should be continued in the government which he had accepted until the matter should be further considered, and letters to that effect were at once written. Then came messenger from Sir Thomas Heneage, bringing despatches from that envoy, and a second and most secret one from the Earl himself. Burghley took the precious letter which the favourite had addressed to his royal mistress, and had occasion to observe its magical effect. Walsingham and the Lord Treasurer had been right in so earnestly remonstrating with him on his previous silence.

"She read your letter," said Burghley, "and, in very truth, I found her princely heart touched with favourable interpretation of your actions; affirming them to be only offensive to her, in that she was not made privy to them; not now misliking that you had the authority."



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Such, at fifty-three, was Elizabeth Tudor. A gentle whisper of idolatry from the lips of the man she loved, and she was wax in his hands. Where now were the vehement protestations of horror that her public declaration of principles and motives had been set at nought? Where now were her vociferous denunciations of the States, her shrill invectives against Leicester, her big oaths, and all the 'hysterica passio,' which had sent poor Lord Burghley to bed with the gout, and inspired the soul of Walsingham with dismal forebodings? Her anger had dissolved into a shower of tenderness, and if her parsimony still remained it was because that could only vanish when she too should cease to be.

And thus, for a moment, the grave diplomatic difference between the crown of England and their high mightinesses the United States—upon the solution of which the fate of Christendom was hanging—seemed to shrink to the dimensions of a lovers' quarrel. Was it not strange that the letter had been so long delayed?

Davison had exhausted argument in defence of the acceptance by the Earl of the authority conferred by the States and had gained nothing by his eloquence, save abuse from the Queen, and acrimonious censure from the Earl. He had deeply offended both by pleading the cause of the erring favourite, when the favourite should have spoken for himself. "Poor Mr. Davison," said Walsingham, "doth take it very grievously that your Lordship should conceive so hardly of him as you do. I find the conceit of your Lordship's disfavour hath greatly dejected him. But at such time as he arrived her Majesty was so incensed, as all the arguments and orators in the world could not have wrought any satisfaction."

But now a little billet-doux had done what all the orators in the world could not do. The arguments remained the same, but the Queen no longer "misliked that Leicester should have the authority." It was natural that the Lord Treasurer should express his satisfaction at this auspicious result.

"I did commend her princely nature," he said, "in allowing your good intention, and excusing you of any spot of evil meaning; and I thought good to hasten her resolution, which you must now take to come from a favourable good mistress. You must strive with your nature to throw over your shoulder that which is past."

Sir Walter Raleigh, too, who had been "falsely and pestilently" represented to the Earl as an enemy, rather than what he really was, a most ardent favourer of the Netherland cause, wrote at once to congratulate him on the change in her Majesty's demeanour. "The Queen is in very good terms with you now," he said, "and, thanks be to God, well pacified, and you are again her 'sweet Robin.'"

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Sir Walter wished to be himself the bearer of the comforting despatches to Leicester, on the ground that he had been represented as an “ill instrument against him,” and in order that he might justify himself against the charge, with his own lips. The Queen, however, while professing to make use of Shirley as the messenger, bade Walsingham declare to the Earl, upon her honour, that Raleigh had done good offices for him, and that, in the time of her anger, he had been as earnest in his defence as the best friend could be. It would have been—singular, indeed, had it been otherwise. “Your Lordship,” said Sir Walter, “doth well understand my affection toward Spain, and how I have consumed the best part of my fortune, hating the tyrannous prosperity of that state. It were strange and monstrous that I should now become an enemy to my country and conscience. All that I have desired at your Lordship’s hands is that you will evermore deal directly with me in all matters —of suspect doubleness, and so ever esteem me as you shall find me deserving good or bad. In the mean time, let no poetical scribe work your Lordship by any device to doubt that I am a hollow or cold servant to the action.”

It was now agreed that letters should be drawn, up authorizing Leicester to continue in the office which he held, until the state-council should devise some modification in his commission. As it seemed, however, very improbable that the board would devise anything of the kind, Burghley expressed the belief that the country was like to continue in the Earl’s government without any change whatever. The Lord Treasurer was also of opinion that the Queen’s letters to Leicester would convey as much comfort as he had received discomfort; although he admitted that there was a great difference: The former letters he knew had deeply wounded his heart, while the new ones could not suddenly sink so low as the wound.

The despatch to the States-General was benignant, elaborate, slightly diffuse. The Queen’s letter to ‘sweet Robin’ was caressing, but argumentative.

“It is always thought,” said she, “in the opinion of the world, a hard bargain when both parties are losers, and so doth fall out in the case between us two. You, as we hear, are greatly grieved in respect of the great displeasure you find we have conceived against you. We are no less grieved that a subject of ours of that quality that you are, a creature of our own, and one that hath always received an extraordinary portion of our favour above all our subjects, even from the beginning of our reign, should deal so carelessly, not to say contemptuously, as to give the world just cause to think that we are had in contempt by him that ought most to respect and reverence us, which, we do assure you, hath wrought as great grief in us as anyone thing that ever happened unto us.



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“We are persuaded that you, that have so long known us, cannot think that ever we could have been drawn to have taken so hard a course therein had we not been provoked by an extraordinary cause. But for that your grieved and wounded mind hath more need of comfort than reproof, who, we are persuaded, though the act of contempt can no ways be excused, had no other meaning and intent than to advance our service, we think meet to forbear to dwell upon a matter wherein we ourselves do find so little comfort, assuring you that whosoever professeth to love you best taketh not more comfort of your well doing, or discomfort of your evil doing than ourself.”

After this affectionate preface she proceeded to intimate her desire that the Earl should take the matter as nearly as possible into his own hands. It was her wish that he should retain the authority of absolute governor, but—if it could be so arranged—that he should dispense with the title, retaining only that of her lieutenant-general. It was not her intention however, to create any confusion or trouble in the Provinces, and she was therefore willing that the government should remain upon precisely the same footing as that on which it then stood, until circumstances should permit the change of title which she suggested. And the whole matter was referred to the wisdom of Leicester, who was to advise with Heneage and such others as he liked to consult, although it was expressly stated that the present arrangement was to be considered a provisional and not a final one.

Until this soothing intelligence could arrive in the Netherlands the suspicions concerning the underhand negotiations with Spain grew daily more rife, and the discredit cast upon the Earl more embarrassing. The private letters which passed between the Earl’s enemies in Holland and in England contained matter more damaging to himself and to the cause which he had at heart than the more public reports of modern days can disseminate, which, being patent to all, can be more easily contradicted. Leicester incessantly warned his colleagues of her Majesty’s council against the malignant manufacturers of intelligence. “I pray you, my Lords, as you are wise,” said he, “beware of them all. You shall find them here to be shrewd pick-thinks, and hardly worth the hearkening unto.”

He complained bitterly of the disgrace that was heaped upon him, both publicly and privately, and of the evil consequences which were sure to follow from the course pursued. “Never was man so villanously handled by letters out of England as I have been,” said he, “not only advertising her Majesty’s great dislike with me before this my coming over, but that I was an odious man in England, and so long as I tarried here that no help was to be looked for, that her Majesty would send no more men or money, and that I was used here but for a time till a peace were concluded between her Majesty and the Prince of Parma. What the continuance of a man’s discredit thus will turn out is to be thought of, for better I were a thousand times displaced than that her Majesty’s great advantage of so notable Provinces should be hindered.”



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As to the peace-negotiations—which, however cunningly managed, could not remain entirely concealed—the Earl declared them to be as idle as they were disingenuous. “I will boldly pronounce that all the peace you can make in the world, leaving these countries,” said he to Burghley, “will never prove other than a fair spring for a few days, to be all over blasted with a hard storm after.” Two days later her Majesty’s comforting letters arrived, and the Earl began to raise his drooping head. Heneage, too, was much relieved, but he was, at the same time, not a little perplexed. It was not so easy to undo all the mischief created by the Queen’s petulance. The “scorpion’s sting”—as her Majesty expressed herself—might be balsamed, but the poison had spread far beyond the original wound.

“The letters just brought in,” wrote Heneage to Burghley, “have well relieved a most noble and sufficient servant, but I fear they will not restore the much-repaired wrecks of these far-decayed noble countries into the same state I found them in. A loose, disordered, and unknit state needs no shaking, but propping. A subtle and fearful kind of people—should not be made more distrustful, but assured.” He then expressed annoyance at the fault already found with him, and surely if ever man had cause to complain of reproof administered him, in quick succession; for not obeying contradictory directions following upon each other as quickly, that man was Sir Thomas Heneage. He had been, as he thought, over cautious in administering the rebuke to the Earl’s arrogance, which he had been expressly sent over to administer but scarcely had he accomplished his task, with as much delicacy as he could devise, when he found himself censured;—not for dilatoriness, but for haste. “Fault I perceive,” said he to Burghley, “is found in me, not by your Lordship, but by some other, that I did not stay proceeding if I found the public cause might take hurt. It is true I had good warrant for the manner, the, place, and the persons, but, for the matter none, for done it must be. Her Majesty’s offence must be declared. Yet if I did not all I possibly could to uphold the cause, and to keep the tottering cause upon the wheels, I deserve no thanks, but reproof.”

Certainly, when the blasts of royal rage are remembered, by which the envoy had been, as it were, blown out of England into Holland, it is astonishing to find his actions censured for undue precipitancy. But it was not the, first, nor was it likely to be the last time, for comparatively subordinate agents in Elizabeth’s government to be, distressed by, contradictory commands, when the sovereign did not know or did not chose to make known, her own mind on important occasions. “Well, my Lord,” said plaintive Sir Thomas, “wiser men may serve more pleasingly and happily, but never shall any serve her Majesty more, faithfully and heartily. And so I cannot be persuaded her Majesty thinketh; for from herself I find nothing but most sweet and—gracious, favour, though by others’ censures I may gather otherwise of her judgment; which I confess, doth cumber me.”



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He was destined to be cumbered more than once before these negotiations should be concluded; but meantime; there was a brief gleam of sunshine. The English friends of Leicester in the Netherlands were enchanted with the sudden change in the Queen's humour; and to Lord Burghley, who was not, in reality, the most staunch of the absent Earl's defenders, they poured themselves out in profuse and somewhat superfluous gratitude.

Cavendish, in strains exultant, was sure that Burghley's children, grand-children, and remotest posterity, would rejoice that their great ancestor, in such a time of need had been "found and felt to be indeed a 'pater patria,' a good-father to a happy land." And, although unwilling to "stir up the old Adam" in his Lordship's soul, he yet took the liberty of comparing the Lord Treasurer, in his old and declining years with Mary Magdalen; assuring him, that for ever after; when the tale of the preservation of the Church of God, of her Majesty; and of the Netherland cause; which were all one, should be told; his name and well-doing would be held in memory also.

And truly there was much of honest and generous enthusiasm, even if couched in language somewhat startling to the ears of a colder and more material age; in the hearts of these noble volunteers. They were fighting the cause of England, of the Netherland republic, and of human liberty; with a valour worthy the best days of English' chivalry, against manifold obstacles, and they were certainly; not too often cheered by the beams of royal favour.

It was a pity that a dark cloud was so soon again to sweep over the scene: For the temper of Elizabeth at this important juncture seemed as capricious: as the: April weather in which the scenes were enacting. We have seen the genial warmth of her letters and messages to Leicester, to Heneage,—to the States-General; on the first of the month. Nevertheless it was hardly three weeks after they had been despatched when Walsingham and Burghley found, her Majesty one morning a towering passion, because, the Earl had not already laid down the government. The Lord Treasurer ventured to remonstrate, but was bid to bold his tongue. Ever variable and mutable as woman, Elizabeth was perplexing and baffling to her counsellors, at this epoch, beyond all divination. The "sparing humour" was increasing fearfully, and she thought it would be easier for her to slip out of the whole expensive enterprise, provided Leicester were merely her lieutenant-general, and not stadholder for the Provinces. Moreover the secret negotiations for peace were producing a deleterious effect upon her mind. Upon this subject, the Queen and Burghley, notwithstanding his resemblance to Mary Magdalen, were better informed than the Secretary, whom, however, it had been impossible wholly to deceive. The man who could read secrets so far removed as the Vatican, was not to be blinded to intrigues going on before his face. The Queen, without revealing more

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than she could help, had been obliged to admit that informal transactions were pending, but had authorised the Secretary to assure the United States that no treaty would be made without their knowledge and full concurrence. “She doth think,” wrote Walsingham to Leicester,” that you should, if you shall see no cause to the contrary, acquaint the council of state there that certain overtures of peace are daily made unto her, but that she meaneth not to proceed therein without their good liking and privity, being persuaded that there can no peace be made profitable or sure for her that shall not also stand with their safety; and she doth acknowledge hers to be so linked with theirs as nothing can fall out to their prejudice, but she must be partaker of their harm.”

This communication was dated on the 21st April, exactly three weeks after the Queen’s letter to Heneage, in which she had spoken of the “malicious bruits” concerning the pretended peace-negotiations; and the Secretary was now confirming, by her order, what she had then stated under her own hand, that she would “do nothing that might concern them without their own knowledge and good liking.”

And surely nothing could be more reasonable. Even if the strict letter of the August treaty between the Queen and the States did not provide against any separate negotiations by the one party without the knowledge of the other, there could be no doubt at all that its spirit absolutely forbade the clandestine conclusion of a peace with Spain by England alone, or by the Netherlands alone, and that such an arrangement would be disingenuous, if not positively dishonourable.

Nevertheless it would almost seem that Elizabeth had been taking advantage of the day when she was writing her letter to Heneage on the 1st of April. Never was painstaking envoy more elaborately trifled with. On the 26th of the month—and only five days after the communication by Walsingham just noticed—the Queen was furious that any admission should have been made to the States of their right to participate with her in peace-negotiations.

“We find that Sir Thomas Heneage,” said she to Leicester, “hath gone further—in assuring the States that we would make no peace without their privity and assent—than he had commission; for that our direction was— if our meaning had been well set down, and not mistaken by our Secretary —that they should have been only let understand that in any treaty that might pass between us and Spain, they might be well assured we would have no less care of their safety than of our own.” Secretary Walsingham was not likely to mistake her Majesty’s directions in this or any other important affair of state. Moreover, it so happened that the Queen had, in her own letter to Heneage, made the same statement which she now chose to disavow. She had often a convenient way of making herself misunderstood, when she thought it desirable to shift responsibility from her own shoulders upon those of others; but upon this occasion she had been sufficiently explicit. Nevertheless, a scape-goat was necessary, and unhappy the

subordinate who happened to be within her Majesty's reach when a vicarious sacrifice was to be made. Sir Francis Walsingham was not a man to be brow-beaten or hood-winked, but Heneage was doomed to absorb a fearful amount of royal wrath.



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“What phlegmatical reasons soever were made you,” wrote the Queen, who but three weeks before had been so gentle and affectionate to her, ambassador, “how happeneth it that you will not remember, that when a man hath faulted and committed by abettors thereto, neither the one nor the other will willingly make their own retreat. Jesus! what availeth wit, when it fails the owner at greatest need? Do that you are bidden, and leave your considerations for your own affairs. For in some things you had clear commandment, which you did not, and in others none, and did. We princes be wary enough of our bargains. Think you I will be bound by your own speech to make no peace for mine own matters without their consent? It is enough that I injure not their country nor themselves in making peace for them without their consent. I am assured of your dutiful thoughts, but I am utterly at squares with this childish dealing.”

Blasted by this thunderbolt falling upon his head out of serenest sky, the sad. Sir. Thomas remained, for a time, in a state of political annihilation. ‘Sweet Robin’ meanwhile, though stunned, was unscathed— thanks to the convenient conductor at his side. For, in Elizabeth’s court, mediocrity was not always golden, nor was it usually the loftiest mountains that the lightnings smote. The Earl was deceived by his royal mistress, kept in the dark as to important transactions, left to provide for his famishing’ soldiers as he best might; but the, Queen at that moment, though angry, was not disposed, to trample upon him. Now that his heart was known to be broken, and his sole object in life to be retirement to remote regions—India or elsewhere—there to languish out the brief remainder of his days in prayers for Elizabeth’s happiness, Elizabeth was not inclined very bitterly to upbraid him. She had too recently been employing herself in binding up his broken heart, and pouring balm into the “scorpion’s sting,” to be willing so soon to deprive him of those alleviations.

Her tone—was however no longer benignant, and her directions were extremely peremptory. On the 1st of April she had congratulated Leicester, Heneage, the States, and all the world, that her secret commands had been staid, and that the ruin which would have followed, had, those decrees been executed according to her first violent wish, was fortunately averted. Heneage was even censured, not by herself, but by courtiers in her confidence, and with her concurrence, for being over hasty in going before the state-council, as he had done, with her messages and commands. On the 26th of April she expressed astonishment that Heneage had dared to be so dilatory, and that the title of governor had not been laid down by Leicester “out of hand.” She marvelled greatly, and found it very strange that “ministers in matters of moment should presume to do things of their own head without direction.” She accordingly gave orders that there should be no more dallying, but that the Earl should immediately hold a conference with the state-council in order to arrange a modification in his commission. It was her pleasure that he should retain all the authority granted to him by the States, but as already intimated by her, that he should abandon the title of “absolute governor,” and retain only that of her lieutenant-general.



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Was it strange that Heneage, placed in so responsible a situation, and with the fate of England, of Holland, and perhaps of all Christendom, hanging in great measure upon this delicate negotiation, should be amazed at such contradictory orders, and grieved by such inconsistent censures?

“To tell you my griefs and my lacks,” said he to Walsingham, “would little please you or help me. Therefore I will say nothing, but think there was never man in so great a service received so little comfort and so contrarious directions. But ‘Dominus est adjutor in tribulationibus.’ If it be possible, let me receive some certain direction, in following which I shall not offend her Majesty, what good or hurt soever I do besides.”

This certainly seemed a loyal and reasonable request, yet it was not one likely to be granted. Sir Thomas, perplexed, puzzled, blindfolded, and brow-beaten, always endeavoring to obey orders, when he could comprehend them, and always hectoring and lectured whether he obeyed them or not—ruined in purse by the expenses, of a mission on which he had been sent without adequate salary—appalled at the disaffection waging more formidable every hour in Provinces which were recently so loyal to her Majesty, but which were now pervaded by a suspicion that there was double-dealing upon her part became quite sick of his life. He fell seriously ill, and was disappointed, when, after a time, the physicians declared him convalescent. For when he rose from his sick-bed, it was only to plunge once more, without a clue, into the labyrinth where he seemed to be losing his reason. “It is not long,” said he to Walsingham, “since I looked to have written you no more letters, my extremity was so great. . . . But God’s will is best, otherwise I could have liked better to have cumbered the earth no longer, where I find myself contemned, and which I find no reason to see will be the better in the wearing. . . . It were better for her Majesty’s service that the directions which come were not contrarious one to another, and that those you would have serve might know what is meant, else they cannot but much deceive you, as well as displease you.”

Public opinion concerning the political morality of the English court was not gratifying, nor was it rendered more favourable by these recent transactions. “I fear,” said Heneage, “that the world will judge what Champagny wrote in one of his letters out of England (which I have lately seen) to be over true. His words be these, ‘Et de vray, c’est le plus fascheux et le plus incertain negocier de ceste court, que je pense soit au monde.’” And so “basting,” as he said, “with a weak body and a willing mind; to do, he feared, no good work,” he set forth from Middelburgh to rejoin Leicester at Arnheim, in order to obey, as well as he could, the Queen’s latest directions.



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But before he could set to work there came more “contrarious” orders. The last instructions, both to Leicester and himself, were that the Earl should resign the post of governor absolute “out of hand,” and the Queen had been vehement in denouncing any delay on such an occasion. He was now informed, that, after consulting with Leicester and with the state-council, he was to return to England with the result of such deliberations. It could afterwards be decided how the Earl could retain all the authority of governor absolute, while bearing only the title of the Queen’s lieutenant general. “For her meaning is not,” said Walsingham, “that his Lord ship should presently give it over, for she foreseeth in her princely judgment that his giving over the government upon a sudden, and leaving those countries without a head or director, cannot but breed a most dangerous alteration there.” The secretary therefore stated the royal wish at present to be that the “renunciation of the title” should be delayed till Heneage could visit England, and subsequently return to Holland with her Majesty’s further directions. Even the astute Walsingham was himself puzzled, however, while conveying these ambiguous orders; and he confessed that he was doubtful whether he had rightly comprehended the Queen’s intentions. Burghley, however, was better at guessing riddles than he was, and so Heneage was advised to rely chiefly upon Burghley.

But Heneage had now ceased to be interested in any enigmas that might be propounded by the English court, nor could he find comfort, as Walsingham had recommended he should do, in railing. “I wish I could follow your counsel,” he said, “but sure the uttering of my choler doth little ease my grief or help my case.”

He rebuked, however, the inconsistency and the tergiversations of the government with a good deal of dignity. “This certainly shall I tell her Majesty,” he said, “if I live to see her, that except a more constant course be taken with this inconstant people, it is not the blaming of her ministers will advance her Highness’s service, or better the state of things. And shall I tell you what they now say here of us—I fear not without some cause—even as Lipsius wrote of the French, ‘De Gallis quidem enigmata veniunt, non veniunt, volunt, holunt, audent, timent, omnia, ancipiti metu, suspensa et suspecta.’ God grant better, and ever keep you and help me.”

He announced to Burghley that he was about to attend a meeting of the state-council the next day, for the purpose of a conference on these matters at Arnheim, and that he would then set forth for England to report proceedings to her Majesty. He supposed, on the whole, that this was what was expected of him, but acknowledged it hopeless to fathom the royal intentions. Yet if he went wrong, he was always, sure to make mischief, and though innocent, to be held accountable for others’ mistakes. “Every prick I make,” said he, “is made a gash; and



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to follow the words of my directions from England is not enough, except I likewise see into your minds. And surely mine eyesight is not so good. But I will pray to God for his help herein. With all the wit I have, I will use all the care I can—first, to satisfy her Majesty, as God knoweth I have ever most desired; then, not to hurt this cause, but that I despair of.” Leicester, as maybe supposed, had been much discomfited and perplexed during the course of these contradictory and perverse directions. There is no doubt whatever that his position had been made discreditable and almost ridiculous, while he was really doing his best, and spending large sums out of his private fortune to advance the true interests of the Queen. He had become a suspected man in the Netherlands, having been, in the beginning of the year, almost adored as a Messiah. He had submitted to the humiliation which had been imposed upon him, of being himself the medium to convey to the council the severe expressions of the Queen’s displeasure at the joint action of the States-General and himself. He had been comforted by the affectionate expressions with which that explosion of feminine and royal wrath had been succeeded. He was now again distressed by the peremptory command to do what was a disgrace to him, and an irreparable detriment to the cause, yet he was humble and submissive, and only begged to be allowed, as a remedy for all his anguish, to return to the sunlight of Elizabeth’s presence. He felt that her course; if persisted in, would lead to the destruction of the Netherland commonwealth, and eventually to the downfall of England; and that the Provinces, believing themselves deceived by the Queen; were ready to revolt against an authority to which, but a short time before, they were so devotedly loyal Nevertheless, he only wished to know what his sovereign’s commands distinctly were, in order to set himself to their fulfilment. He had come from the camp before Nymegen in order to attend the conference with the state-council at Arnheim, and he would then be ready and anxious to, despatch Heneage to England, to learn her Majesty’s final determination.

He protested to the Queen that he had come upon this arduous and perilous service only, because he, considered her throne in danger, and that this was the only means of preserving it; that, in accepting the absolute government, he had been free from all ambitious motives, but deeply impressed with the idea that only by so doing could he conduct the enterprise entrusted to him to the desired consummation; and he declared with great fervour that no advancement to high office could compensate him for this enforced absence from her. To be sent back even in disgrace would still be a boon to him, for he should cease to be an exile from her sight. He knew that his enemies had been busy in defaming him, while he had been no longer there to defend himself, but his conscience acquitted him of any thought which was not for her happiness and glory. “Yet grievous it is to me,” said he in, a tone of tender reproach, “that having left all—yea, all that may be imagined—for you, you have left me for very little, even to the uttermost of all hard fortune. For what have I, unhappy man, to do here either with cause or country but for you?”



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He stated boldly that his services had not been ineffective, that the enemy had never been in worse plight than now, that he had lost at least five thousand men in divers overthrows, and that, on the other hand, the people and towns of the Seven Provinces had been safely preserved. "Since my arrival," he said, "God hath blessed the action which you have taken in hand, and committed to the charge of me your poor unhappy servant. I have good cause to say somewhat for myself, for that I think I have as few friends to speak for me as any man."

Nevertheless—as he warmly protested—his only wish was to return; for the country in which he had lost her favour, which was more precious than life, had become odious to him.

The most lowly office in her presence was more to be coveted than the possession of unlimited power away from her. It was by these tender and soft insinuations, as the Earl knew full well, that he was sure to obtain what he really coveted—her sanction for retaining the absolute government in the Provinces. And most artfully did he strike the key.

"Most dear and gracious Lady," he cried, "my care and service here do breed me nothing but grief and unhappiness. I have never had your Majesty's good favour since I came into this charge—a matter that from my first beholding your eyes hath been most dear unto me above all earthly treasures. Never shall I love that place or like that soil which shall cause the lack of it. Most gracious Lady, consider my long, true, and faithful heart toward you. Let not this unfortunate place here bereave me of that which, above all the world, I esteem there, which is your favour and your presence. I see my service is not acceptable, but rather more and more disliketh you. Here I can do your Majesty no service; there I can do you some, at the least rub your horse's heels— a service which shall be much more welcome to me than this, with all that these men may give me. I do, humbly and from my heart, prostrate at your feet, beg this grace at your sacred hands, that you will be pleased to let me return to my home-service, with your favour, let the revocation be used in what sort shall please and like you. But if ever spark of favour was in your Majesty toward your old servant, let me obtain this my humble suit; protesting before the Majesty of all Majesties, that there was no cause under Heaven but his and yours, even for your own special and particular cause, I say, could have made me take this absent journey from you in hand. If your Majesty shall refuse me this, I shall think all grace clean gone from me, and I know: my days will not be long."



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She must melt at this, thought 'sweet Robin' to himself; and meantime accompanied by Heneage; he proceeded with the conferences in the state-council-chamber touching the modification of the title and the confirmation of his authority. This, so far as Walsingham could divine, and Burghley fathom, was the present intention of the Queen. He averred that he had ever sought most painfully to conform his conduct to her instructions as fast as they were received, and that he should continue so to do. On the whole it was decided by the conference to let matters stand as, they were for a little longer, and until: after Heneage should have time once more to go and come. "The same manner of proceeding that was is now," said Leicester, "Your pleasure is declared to the council here as you have willed it. How it will fall out again in your Majesty's construction, the Lord knoweth."

Leicester might be forgiven for referring to higher powers, for any possible interpretation of her Majesty's changing humour; but meantime; while Sir. Thomas was getting ready, for his expedition to England, the Earl's heart was somewhat gladdened by more gracious messages from the Queen. The alternation of emotions would however prove too much for him, he feared, and he was reluctant to open his heart to so unwonted a tenant as joy.

"But that my fear is such, most dear and gracious Lady," he said, "as my unfortunate destiny will hardly permit; whilst I remain here; any good-acceptation of so simple a service as, mine, I should, greatly rejoice and comfort myself with the hope of your Majesty's most prayed-for favour. But of late, being by your own sacred hand lifted even up into Heaven with joy of your favour, I was bye and bye without any new desert or offence at all, cast down and down: again into the depth of all grief. God doth know, my dear and dread Sovereign, that after I first received your resolute pleasure by Sir Thomas Heneage, I made neither stop nor stay nor any excuse to be rid of this place, and to satisfy your command. So much I mislike this place and fortune of mine; as I desire nothing in the world so much, as to be delivered, with your favours from all charge here, fearing still some new cross of your displeasure to fall upon me, trembling continually with the fear thereof, in such sort as till I may be fully confirmed in my new regeneration of your wonted favour I cannot receive that true comfort which doth appertain to so great a hope. Yet I will not only acknowledge with all humbleness and dutiful thanks the exceeding joy these last blessed lines brought to my long-wearied heart, but will, with all true loyal affection, attend that further joy from your sweet self which may utterly, extinguish all consuming fear away."



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Poor Heneage—who likewise received a kind word or two after having been so capriciously and petulantly dealt with was less extravagant in his expressions of gratitude. “The Queen hath sent me a paper-plaister which must please for a time,” he said. “God Almighty bless her Majesty ever, and best direct her.” He was on the point of starting for England, the bearer of the States’ urgent entreaties that Leicester might retain the, government, and of despatches; announcing the recent success of the allies before Grave. “God prospereth the action in these countries beyond all expectation,” he said, “which all amongst you will not be over glad of, for somewhat I know.” The intrigues of Grafigni, Champagny, and Bodman, with Croft, Burghley, and the others were not so profound a secret as they could wish.

The tone adopted by Leicester has been made manifest in his letters to the Queen. He had held the same language of weariness and dissatisfaction in his communications to his friends. He would not keep the office, he avowed, if they should give him “all Holland and Zeeland, with all their appurtenances,” and he was ready to resign at any moment. He was not “ceremonious for reputation,” he said, but he gave warning that the Netherlanders would grow desperate if they found her Majesty dealing weakly or carelessly with them. As for himself he had already had enough of government. “I am weary, Mr. Secretary,” he plaintively exclaimed, “indeed I am weary; but neither of pains nor travail. My ill hap that I can please her Majesty no better hath quite discouraged me.”

He had recently, however—as we have seen—received some comfort, and he was still further encouraged, upon the eve of Heneage’s departure, by receiving another affectionate epistle from the Queen. Amends seemed at last to be offered for her long and angry silence, and the Earl was deeply grateful.

“If it hath not been, my most dear and gracious Lady,” said he in reply, “no small comfort to your poor old servant to receive but one line of your blessed hand-writing in many months, for the relief of a most grieved, wounded heart, how far more exceeding joy must it be, in the midst of all sorrow, to receive from the same sacred hand so many comfortable lines as my good friend Mr. George hath at once brought me. Pardon me, my sweet Lady, if they cause me to forget myself. Only this I do say, with most humble dutiful thanks, that the scope of all my service hath ever been to content and please you; and if I may do that, then is all sacrifice, either of life or whatsoever, well offered for you.”



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The matter of the government absolute having been so fully discussed during the preceding four months, and the last opinions of the state-council having been so lucidly expounded in the despatches to be carried by Heneage to England, the matter might be considered as exhausted. Leicester contented himself, therefore, with once more calling her Majesty's attention to the fact that if he had not himself accepted the office thus conferred upon him by the States, it would have been bestowed upon some other personage. It would hardly have comported with her dignity, if Count Maurice of Nassau, or Count William, or Count Moeurs, had been appointed governor absolute, for in that case the Earl, as general of the auxiliary English force, would have been subject to the authority of the chieftain thus selected. It was impossible, as the state-council had very plainly shown, for Leicester to exercise supreme authority, while merely holding the military office of her Majesty's lieutenant-general. The authority of governor or stadholder could only be derived from the supreme power of the country. If her Majesty had chosen to accept the sovereignty, as the States had ever desired, the requisite authority could then have been derived from her, as from the original fountain. As she had resolutely refused that offer however, his authority was necessarily to be drawn from the States-General, or else the Queen must content herself with seeing him serve as an English military officer, only subject to the orders of the supreme power, wherever that power might reside. In short, Elizabeth's wish that her general might be clothed with the privileges of her viceroy, while she declined herself to be the sovereign, was illogical, and could not be complied with.

Very soon after inditing these last epistles to the Provinces, the Queen became more reasonable on the subject; and an elaborate communication was soon received by the state-council, in which the royal acquiescence was signified to the latest propositions of the States. The various topics, suggested in previous despatches from Leicester and from the council, were reviewed, and the whole subject was suddenly placed in a somewhat different light from that in which it seemed to have been previously regarded by her Majesty. She alluded to the excuse, offered by the state-council, which had been drawn from the necessity of the case, and from their "great liking for her cousin of Leicester," although in violation of the original contract. "As you acknowledge, however," she said, "that therein you were justly to be blamed, and do crave pardon for the same, we cannot, upon this acknowledgment of your fault, but remove our former dislike."

Nevertheless it would now seem that her "mistake" had proceeded, not from the excess, but from the insufficiency of the powers conferred upon the Earl, and she complained, accordingly, that they had given him shadow rather than substance.



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Simultaneously with this royal communication, came a joint letter to Leicester, from Burghley, Walsingham; and Hatton, depicting the long and strenuous conflict which they had maintained in his behalf with the rapidly varying inclinations of the Queen. They expressed a warm sympathy with the difficulties of his position, and spoke in strong terms of the necessity that the Netherlands and England should work heartily together. For otherwise, they said, "the cause will fall, the enemy will rise, and we must stagger." Notwithstanding the secret negotiations with the enemy, which Leicester and Walsingham suspected, and which will be more fully examined in a subsequent chapter, they held a language on that subject, which in the Secretary's mouth at least was sincere. "Whatsoever speeches be blown abroad of parleys of peace," they said, "all will be but smoke, yea fire will follow."

They excused themselves for their previous and enforced silence by the fact that they had been unable to communicate any tidings but messages of distress, but they now congratulated the Earl that her Majesty, as he would see by her letter to the council, was firmly resolved, not only to countenance his governorship, but to sustain him in the most thorough manner. It would be therefore quite out of the question for them to listen to his earnest propositions to be recalled.

Moreover, the Lord Treasurer had already apprized Leicester that Heneage had safely arrived in England, that he, had made his report to the Queen, and that her Majesty was "very well contented with him and his mission." It may be easily believed that the Earl would feel a sensation of relief, if not of triumph, at this termination to the embarrassments under which he had been labouring ever since, he listened to the oration of the wise Leoninus upon New Years' Day. At last the Queen had formally acquiesced in the action of the States, and in his acceptance of their offer. He now saw himself undisputed "governor absolute," having been six months long a suspected, discredited, almost disgraced man. It was natural that he should express himself cheerfully.

"My great comfort received, oh my most gracious Lady," he said, "by your most favourable lines written by your own sacred hand, I did most humbly acknowledge by my former letter; albeit I can no way make testimony of enough of the great joy I took thereby. And seeing my wounded heart is by this means almost made whole, I do pray unto God that either I may never feel the like again from you, or not be suffered to live, rather than I should fall again into those torments of your displeasure. Most gracious Queen, I beseech you, therefore, make perfect that which you have begun. Let not the common danger, nor any ill, incident to the place I serve you in, be accompanied with greater troubles and fears indeed than all the horrors of death can bring me. My strong hope doth now so assure me, as I have almost won the battle against despair, and I do arm myself with as many of those wonted comfortable conceits as may confirm my new revived spirits, reposing myself evermore under the shadow of those blessed beams that must yield the only nourishment to this disease."



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But however nourishing the shade of those blessed beams might prove to Leicester's disease, it was not so easy to bring about a very sunny condition in the Provinces. It was easier for Elizabeth to mend the broken heart of the governor than to repair the damage which had been caused to the commonwealth by her caprice and her deceit. The dispute concerning the government absolute had died away, but the authority of the Earl had got a "crack in it" which never could be handsomely made whole. The States, during the long period of Leicester's discredit—feeling more and more doubtful as to the secret intentions of Elizabeth—disappointed in the condition of the auxiliary troops and in the amount of supplies furnished from England, and, above all, having had time to regret their delegation of a power which they began to find agreeable to exercise with their own hands, became indisposed to entrust the Earl with the administration and full inspection of their resources. To the enthusiasm which had greeted the first arrival of Elizabeth's representative had succeeded a jealous, carping, suspicious sentiment. The two hundred thousand florins monthly were paid, according to the original agreement, but the four hundred thousand of extra service-money subsequently voted were withheld, and withheld expressly on account of Heneage's original mission to disgrace the governor."

"The late return of Sir Thomas Heneage," said Lord North, "hath put such busses in their heads, as they march forward with leaden heels and doubtful hearts."

In truth, through the discredit cast by the Queen upon the Earl in this important affair, the supreme authority was forced back into the hands of the States, at the very moment when they had most freely divested themselves of power. After the Queen had become more reasonable, it was too late to induce them to part, a second time, so freely with the immediate control of their own affairs. Leicester had become, to a certain extent, disgraced and disliked by the Estates. He thought himself, by the necessity of the case, forced to appeal to the people against their legal representatives, and thus the foundation of a nominally democratic party, in opposition to the municipal one, was already laid. Nothing could be more unfortunate at that juncture; for we shall, in future, find the Earl in perpetual opposition to the most distinguished statesmen in the Provinces; to the very men indeed who had been most influential in offering the sovereignty to England, and in placing him in the position which he had so much coveted. No sooner therefore had he been confirmed by Elizabeth in that high office than his arrogance broke forth, and the quarrels between himself and the representative body became incessant.



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“I stand now in somewhat better terms than I did,” said he; “I was not in case till of late to deal roundly with them as I have now done. I have established a chamber of finances, against some of their wills, whereby I doubt not to procure great benefit to increase our ability for payments hereafter. The people I find still best devoted to her Majesty, though of late many lewd practices have been used to withdraw their good wills. But it will not be; they still pray God that her Majesty may be their sovereign. She should then see what a contribution they will all bring forth. But to the States they will never return, which will breed some great mischief, there is such dislike of the States universally. I would your Lordship had seen the case I had lived in among them these four months, especially after her Majesty’s dislike was found. You would then marvel to see how I have waded, as I have done, through no small obstacles, without help, counsel, or assistance.”

Thus the part which he felt at last called upon to enact was that of an aristocratic demagogue, in perpetual conflict with the burgher-representative body.

It is now necessary to lift a corner of the curtain, by which some international—or rather interpalatial—intrigues were concealed, as much as possible, even from the piercing eyes of Walsingham. The Secretary was, however, quite aware—despite the pains taken to deceive him—of the nature of the plots and of the somewhat ignoble character of the actors concerned in them.

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A hard bargain when both parties are losers
Condemned first and inquired upon after
Disordered, and unknit state needs no shaking, but propping
Upper and lower millstones of royal wrath and loyal subserviency
Uttering of my choler doth little ease my grief or help my case

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