

History of the United Netherlands, 1588a eBook

History of the United Netherlands, 1588a 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, Vol. 55

History of the United Netherlands, 1588

CHAPTER XVIII. Part 1.

Prophecies as to the Year 1588—Distracted Condition of the Dutch Republic—Willoughby reluctantly takes Command—English Commissioners come to Ostend—Secretary Gamier and Robert Cecil—Cecil accompanies Dale to Ghent—And finds the Desolation complete—Interview of Dale and Cecil with Parma—His fervent Expressions in favour of Peace—Cecil makes a Tour in Flanders—And sees much that is remarkable—Interviews of Dr. Rogers with Parma—Wonderful Harangues of the Envoy—Extraordinary Amenity of Alexander—With which Rogers is much touched—The Queen not pleased with her Envoy—Credulity of the English Commissioners—Ceremonious Meeting of all the Envoys—Consummate Art in wasting Time—Long Disputes about Commissions—The Spanish Commissions meant to deceive—Disputes



about Cessation of Arms—Spanish Duplicity and Procrastination— Pedantry and Credulity of Dr. Dale—The Papal Bull and Dr. Allen's Pamphlet—Dale sent to ask Explanations—Parma denies all Knowledge of either—Croft believes to the last in Alexander.

The year 1588 had at last arrived—that fatal year concerning which the German astrologers—more than a century before had prognosticated such dire events. As the epoch approached it was firmly believed by many that the end of the world was at hand, while the least superstitious could not doubt that great calamities were impending over the nations. Portents observed during the winter and in various parts of Europe came to increase the prevailing panic. It rained blood in Sweden, monstrous births occurred in France, and at Weimar it was gravely reported by eminent chroniclers that the sun had appeared at mid-day holding a drawn sword in his mouth—a warlike portent whose meaning could not be mistaken.

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But, in truth, it needed no miracles nor prophecies to enforce the conviction that a long procession of disasters was steadily advancing. With France rent asunder by internal convulsions, with its imbecile king not even capable of commanding a petty faction among his own subjects, with Spain the dark cause of unnumbered evils, holding Italy in its grasp, firmly allied with the Pope, already having reduced and nearly absorbed France, and now, after long and patient preparation, about to hurl the concentrated vengeance and hatred of long years upon the little kingdom of England, and its only ally—the just organized commonwealth of the Netherlands—it would have been strange indeed if the dullest intellect had not dreamed of tragical events. It was not encouraging that there should be distraction in the counsels of the two States so immediately threatened; that the Queen of England should be at variance with her wisest and most faithful statesmen as to their course of action, and that deadly quarrels should exist between the leading men of the Dutch republic and the English governor, who had assumed the responsibility of directing its energies against the common enemy.

The blackest night that ever descended upon the Netherlands—more disappointing because succeeding a period of comparative prosperity and triumph—was the winter of 1587-8, when Leicester had terminated his career by his abrupt departure for England, after his second brief attempt at administration. For it was exactly at this moment of anxious expectation, when dangers were rolling up from the south till not a ray of light or hope could pierce the universal darkness, that the little commonwealth was left without a chief. The English Earl departed, shaking the dust from his feet; but he did not resign. The supreme authority—so far as he could claim it—was again transferred,—with his person, to England.

The consequences were immediate and disastrous. All the Leicestrians refused to obey the States-General. Utrecht, the stronghold of that party, announced its unequivocal intention to annex itself, without any conditions whatever, to the English crown, while, in Holland, young Maurice was solemnly installed stadholder, and captain-general of the Provinces, under the guidance of Hohenlo and Barneveld. But his authority was openly defied in many important cities within his jurisdiction by military chieftains who had taken the oaths of allegiance to Leicester as governor, and who refused to renounce fidelity to the man who had deserted their country, but who had not resigned his authority. Of these mutineers the most eminent was Diedrich Sonoy, governor of North Holland, a soldier of much experience, sagacity, and courage, who had rendered great services to the cause of liberty and Protestantism, and had defaced it by acts of barbarity which had made his name infamous. Against this refractory chieftain it was necessary for Hohenlo and Maurice to lead an armed force, and to besiege him

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in his stronghold—the important city of Medenblik—which he resolutely held for Leicester, although Leicester had definitely departed, and which he closed against Maurice, although Maurice was the only representative of order and authority within the distracted commonwealth. And thus civil war had broken out in the little scarcely-organized republic, as if there were not dangers and bloodshed enough impending over it from abroad. And the civil war was the necessary consequence of the Earl's departure.

The English forces—reduced as they were by sickness, famine, and abject poverty—were but a remnant of the brave and well-seasoned bands which had faced the Spaniards with success on so many battle-fields.

The general who now assumed chief command over them—by direction of Leicester, subsequently confirmed by the Queen—was Lord Willoughby. A daring, splendid dragoon, an honest, chivalrous, and devoted servant of his Queen, a conscientious adherent of Leicester, and a firm believer in his capacity and character, he was, however, not a man of sufficient experience or subtlety to perform the various tasks imposed upon him by the necessities of such a situation. Quick-witted, even brilliant in intellect, and the bravest of the brave on the battle-field, he was neither a sagacious administrator nor a successful commander. And he honestly confessed his deficiencies, and disliked the post to which he had been elevated. He scorned baseness, intrigue, and petty quarrels, and he was impatient of control. Testy, choleric, and quarrelsome, with a high sense of honour, and a keen perception of insult, very modest and very proud, he was not likely to feed with wholesome appetite upon the unsavoury annoyances which were the daily bread of a chief commander in the Netherlands. “I ambitiously affect not high titles, but round dealing,” he said; “desiring rather to be a private lance with indifferent reputation, than a colonel-general spotted or defamed with wants.” He was not the politician to be matched against the unscrupulous and all-accomplished Farnese; and indeed no man better than Willoughby could illustrate the enormous disadvantage under which Englishmen laboured at that epoch in their dealings with Italians and Spaniards. The profuse indulgence in falsehood which characterized southern statesmanship, was more than a match for English love of truth. English soldiers and negotiators went naked into a contest with enemies armed in a panoply of lies. It was an unequal match, as we have already seen, and as we are soon more clearly to see. How was an English soldier who valued his knightly word—how were English diplomatists—among whom one of the most famous—then a lad of twenty, secretary to Lord Essex in the Netherlands—had poetically avowed that “simple truth was highest skill,” —to deal with the thronging Spanish deceits sent northward by the great father of lies who sat in the Escorial?



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“It were an ill lesson,” said Willoughby, “to teach soldiers the, dissimulations of such as follow princes’ courts, in Italy. For my own part, it is my only end to be loyal and dutiful to my sovereign, and plain to all others that I honour. I see the finest reynard loses his best coat as well as the poorest sheep.” He was also a strong Leicestrian, and had imbibed much of the Earl’s resentment against the leading politicians of the States. Willoughby was sorely in need of council. That shrewd and honest Welshman—Roger Williams—was, for the moment, absent. Another of the same race and character commanded in Bergen-op-Zoom, but was not more gifted with administrative talent than the general himself.

“Sir Thomas Morgan is a very sufficient, gallant gentleman,” said Willoughby, “and in truth a very old soldier; but we both have need of one that can both give and keep counsel better than ourselves. For action he is undoubtedly very able, if there were no other means to conquer but only to give blows.”

In brief, the new commander of the English forces in the Netherlands was little satisfied with the States, with the enemy, or with himself; and was inclined to take but a dismal view of the disjointed commonwealth, which required so incompetent a person as he professed himself to be to set it right.

“’Tis a shame to show my wants,” he said, “but too great a fault of duty that the Queen’s reputation be frustrate. What is my slender experience! What an honourable person do I succeed! What an encumbered popular state is left! What withered sinews, which it passes my cunning to restore! What an enemy in head greater than heretofore! And wherewithal should I sustain this burthen? For the wars I am fitter to obey than to command. For the state, I am a man prejudicated in their opinion, and not the better liked of them that have earnestly followed the general, and, being one that wants both opinion and experience with them I have to deal, and means to win more or to maintain that which is left, what good may be looked for?”

The supreme authority—by the retirement of Leicester—was once more the subject of dispute. As on his first departure, so also on this his second and final one, he had left a commission to the state-council to act as an executive body during his absence. But, although he—nominally still retained his office, in reality no man believed in his return; and the States-General were ill inclined to brook a species of guardianship over them, with which they believed themselves mature enough to dispense. Moreover the state-council, composed mainly of Leicestrians, would expire, by limitation of its commission, early in February of that year. The dispute for power would necessarily terminate, therefore, in favour of the States-General.

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Meantime—while this internal revolution was taking place in the polity of the commonwealth—the gravest disturbances were its natural consequence. There were mutinies in the garrisons of Heusden, of Gertruydenberg, of Medenblik, as alarming, and threatening to become as chronic in their character, as those extensive military rebellions which often rendered the Spanish troops powerless at the most critical epochs. The cause of these mutinies was uniformly, want of pay, the pretext, the oath to the Earl of Leicester, which was declared incompatible with the allegiance claimed by Maurice in the name of the States-General. The mutiny of Gertruydenberg was destined to be protracted; that of Medenblik, dividing, as it did, the little territory of Holland in its very heart, it was most important at once to suppress. Sonoy, however—who was so staunch a Leicestrian, that his Spanish contemporaries uniformly believed him to be an Englishman—held out for a long time, as will be seen, against the threats and even the armed demonstrations of Maurice and the States.

Meantime the English sovereign, persisting in her delusion, and despite the solemn warnings of her own wisest counsellors; and the passionate remonstrances of the States-General of the Netherlands, sent her peace-commissioners to the Duke of Parma.

The Earl of Derby, Lord Cobham, Sir James Croft, Valentine Dale, doctor of laws, and former ambassador at Vienna, and Dr. Rogers, envoys on the part of the Queen, arrived in the Netherlands in February. The commissioners appointed on the part of Farnese were Count Aremberg, Champagny, Richardot, Jacob Maas, and Secretary Garnier.

If history has ever furnished a lesson, how an unscrupulous tyrant, who has determined upon enlarging his own territories at the expense of his neighbours, upon oppressing human freedom wherever it dared to manifest itself, with fine phrases of religion and order for ever in his mouth, on deceiving his friends and enemies alike, as to his nefarious and almost incredible designs, by means of perpetual and colossal falsehoods; and if such lessons deserve to be pondered, as a source of instruction and guidance for every age, then certainly the secret story of the negotiations by which the wise Queen of England was beguiled, and her kingdom brought to the verge of ruin, in the spring of 1588, is worthy of serious attention.

The English commissioners arrived at Ostend. With them came Robert Cecil, youngest son of Lord-Treasurer Burghley, then twenty-five years of age.—He had no official capacity, but was sent by his father, that he might improve his diplomatic talents, and obtain some information as to the condition of the Netherlands. A slight, crooked, hump-backed young gentleman, dwarfish in stature, but with a face not irregular in feature, and thoughtful and subtle in expression, with reddish hair, a thin tawny beard, and large, pathetic, greenish-coloured eyes, with a

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mind and manners already trained to courts and cabinets, and with a disposition almost ingenuous, as compared to the massive dissimulation with which it was to be contrasted, and with what was, in aftertimes, to constitute a portion of his own character, Cecil, young as he was, could not be considered the least important of the envoys. The Queen, who loved proper men, called him “her pigmy;” and “although,” he observed with whimsical courtliness, “I may not find fault with the sporting name she gives me, yet seem I only not to dislike it, because she gives it.” The strongest man among them was Valentine Dale, who had much shrewdness, experience, and legal learning, but who valued himself, above all things, upon his Latinity. It was a consolation to him, while his adversaries were breaking Priscian’s head as fast as the Duke, their master, was breaking his oaths, that his own syntax was as clear as his conscience. The feeblest commissioner was James-a-Croft, who had already exhibited himself with very anile characteristics, and whose subsequent manifestations were to seem like dotage. Doctor Rogers, learned in the law, as he unquestionably was, had less skill in reading human character, or in deciphering the physiognomy of a Farnese, while Lord Derby, every inch a grandee, with Lord Cobham to assist him, was not the man to cope with the astute Richardot, the profound and experienced Champagny, or that most voluble and most rhetorical of doctors of law, Jacob Maas of Antwerp.

The commissioners, on their arrival, were welcomed by Secretary Garnier, who had been sent to Ostend to greet them. An adroit, pleasing, courteous gentleman, thirty-six years of age, small, handsome, and attired not quite as a soldier, nor exactly as one of the long robe, wearing a cloak furred to the knee, a cassock of black velvet, with plain gold buttons, and a gold chain about his neck, the secretary delivered handsomely the Duke of Parma’s congratulations, recommended great expedition in the negotiations, and was then invited by the Earl of Derby to dine with the commissioners. He was accompanied by a servant in plain livery, who—so soon as his master had made his bow to the English envoys—had set forth for a stroll through the town. The modest-looking valet, however, was a distinguished engineer in disguise, who had been sent by Alexander for the especial purpose of examining the fortifications of Ostend—that town being a point much coveted, and liable to immediate attack by the Spanish commander.

Meanwhile Secretary Garnier made himself very agreeable, showing wit, experience, and good education; and, after dinner, was accompanied to his lodgings by Dr. Rogers and other gentlemen, with whom—especially with Cecil—he held much conversation.

Knowing that this young gentleman “wanted not an honourable father,” the Secretary was very desirous that he should take this opportunity to make a tour through the Provinces, examine the cities, and especially “note the miserable ruins of the poor country and people.” He would then feelingly perceive how much they had to answer for, whose mad rebellion against their sovereign lord and master had caused so great an effusion of blood, and the wide desolation of such goodly towns and territories.



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Cecil probably entertained a suspicion that the sovereign lord and master, who had been employed, twenty years long, in butchering his subjects and in ravaging their territory to feed his executioners and soldiers, might almost be justified in treating human beings as beasts and reptiles, if they had not at last rebelled. He simply and diplomatically answered, however, that he could not but concur with the Secretary in lamenting the misery of the Provinces and people so utterly despoiled and ruined, but, as it might be matter of dispute; “from what head this fountain of calamity was both fed and derived, he would not enter further therein, it being a matter much too high for his capacity.” He expressed also the hope that the King’s heart might sympathize with that of her Majesty, in earnest compassion for all this suffering, and in determination to compound their differences.

On the following day there was some conversation with Garnier, on preliminary and formal matters, followed in the evening by a dinner at Lord Cobham’s lodgings—a banquet which the forlorn condition of the country scarcely permitted to be luxurious. “We rather pray here for satiety,” said Cecil, “than ever think of variety.”

It was hoped by the Englishmen that the Secretary would take his departure after dinner; for the governor of Ostend, Sir John Conway, had an uneasy sensation, during his visit, that the unsatisfactory condition of the defences would attract his attention, and that a sudden attack by Farnese might be the result. Sir John was not aware however, of the minute and scientific observations then making at the very moment when Mr. Garnier was entertaining the commissioners with his witty and instructive conversation—by the unobtrusive menial who had accompanied the Secretary to Ostend. In order that those observations might be as thorough as possible, rather than with any view to ostensible business, the envoy of Parma now declared that—on account of the unfavourable state of the tide—he had resolved to pass another night at Ostend. “We could have spared his company,” said Cecil, “but their Lordships considered it convenient that he should be used well.” So Mr. Comptroller Croft gave the affable Secretary a dinner-invitation for the following day.

Here certainly was a masterly commencement on the part of the Spanish diplomatists. There was not one stroke of business during the visit of the Secretary. He had been sent simply to convey a formal greeting, and to take the names of the English commissioners—a matter which could have been done in an hour as well as in a week. But it must be remembered, that, at that very moment, the Duke was daily expecting intelligence of the sailing of the Armada, and that Philip, on his part, supposed the Duke already in England, at the head of his army. Under these circumstances, therefore—when the whole object of the negotiation, so far as Parma and his master were, concerned, was to amuse and to gain time—it was already ingenious in Garnier to have consumed several days in doing nothing; and to have obtained plans and descriptions of Ostend into the bargain.



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Garnier—when his departure could no longer, on any pretext, be deferred—took his leave, once more warmly urging Robert Cecil to make a little tour in the obedient Netherlands, and to satisfy himself, by personal observation, of their miserable condition. As Dr. Dale purposed making a preliminary visit to the Duke of Parma at Ghent, it was determined accordingly that he should be accompanied by Cecil.

That young gentleman had already been much impressed by the forlorn aspect of the country about Ostend—for, although the town was itself in possession of the English, it was in the midst of the enemy's territory. Since the fall of Sluys the Spaniards were masters of all Flanders, save this one much-coveted point. And although the Queen had been disposed to abandon that city, and to suffer the ocean to overwhelm it, rather than that she should be at charges to defend it, yet its possession was of vital consequence to the English-Dutch cause, as time was ultimately to show. Meanwhile the position was already a very important one, for—according to the predatory system of warfare of the day—it was an excellent starting-point for those marauding expeditions against persons and property, in which neither the Dutch nor English were less skilled than the Flemings or Spaniards. “The land all about here,” said Cecil, “is so devastated, that where the open country was wont to be covered with kine and sheep, it is now fuller of wild boars and wolves; whereof many come so nigh the town that the sentinels—three of whom watch every night upon a sand-hill outside the gates—have had them in a dark night upon them ere they were aware.”

But the garrison of Ostend was quite as dangerous to the peasants and the country squires of Flanders, as were the wolves or wild boars; and many a pacific individual of retired habits, and with a remnant of property worth a ransom, was doomed to see himself whisked from his seclusion by Conway's troopers, and made a compulsory guest at the city. Prisoners were brought in from a distance of sixty miles; and there was one old gentleman, “well-languaged,” who “confessed merrily to Cecil, that when the soldiers fetched him out of his own mansion-house, sitting safe in his study, he was as little in fear of the garrison of Ostend as he was of the Turk or the devil.”

[And Doctor Rogers held very similar language: “The most dolorous and heavy sights in this voyage to Ghent, by me weighed,” he said; “seeing the countries which, heretofore; by traffic of merchants, as much as any other I have seen flourish, now partly drowned, and, except certain great cities, wholly burned, ruined, and desolate, possessed I say, with wolves, wild boars, and foxes—a great, testimony of the wrath of God,” &c. &c. Dr. Rogers to the Queen,- April, 1588. (S. P. Office Ms.)]

Three days after the departure of Garnier, Dr. Dale and his attendants started upon their expedition from



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Ostend to Ghent—an hour's journey or so in these modern times.—The English envoys, in the sixteenth century, found it a more formidable undertaking. They were many hours traversing the four miles to Oudenburg, their first halting-place; for the waters were out, there having been a great breach of the sea-dyke of Ostend, a disaster threatening destruction to town and country. At Oudenburg, a “small and wretched hole,” as Garnier had described it to be, there was, however, a garrison of three thousand Spanish soldiers, under the Marquis de Renti. From these a convoy of fifty troopers was appointed to protect the English travellers to Bruges. Here they arrived at three o'clock, were met outside the gates by the famous General La Motte, and by him escorted to their lodgings in the “English house,” and afterwards handsomely entertained at supper in his own quarters.

The General's wife; Madame de la Motte, was, according to Cecil, “a fair gentlewoman of discreet and modest behaviour, and yet not unwilling sometimes to hear herself speak;” so that in her society, and in that of her sister—“a nun of the order of the Mounts, but who, like the rest of the sisterhood, wore an ordinary dress in the evening, and might leave the convent if asked in marriage”—the supper passed off very agreeably.

In the evening Cecil found that his father had formerly occupied the same bedroom of the English hotel in which he was then lodged; for he found that Lord Burghley had scrawled his name in the chimney-corner—a fact which was highly gratifying to the son.

The next morning, at seven o'clock, the travellers set forth for Ghent. The journey was a miserable one. It was as cold and gloomy weather as even a Flemish month of March could furnish. A drizzling rain was falling all day long, the lanes were foul and miry, the frequent thickets which overhung their path were swarming with the freebooters of Zeeland, who were “ever at hand,” says Cecil, “to have picked our purses, but that they descried our convoy, and so saved themselves in the woods.” Sitting on horseback ten hours without alighting, under such circumstances as these, was not luxurious for a fragile little gentleman like Queen Elizabeth's “pigmy;” especially as Dr. Dale and himself had only half a red herring between them for luncheon, and supped afterwards upon an orange. The envoy protested that when they could get a couple of eggs a piece, while travelling in Flanders, “they thought they fared like princes.”

Nevertheless Cecil and himself fought it out manfully, and when they reached Ghent, at five in the evening, they were met by their acquaintance Garnier, and escorted to their lodgings. Here they were waited upon by President Richardot, “a tall gentleman,” on behalf of the Duke of Parma, and then left to their much-needed repose.

Nothing could be more forlorn than the country of the obedient Netherlands, through which their day's journey had led them. Desolation had been the reward of obedience.

“The misery of the inhabitants,” said Cecil, “is incredible, both without the town, where all things are wasted, houses spoiled, and grounds unlaboured, and also, even in these great cities, where they are for the most part poor beggars even in the fairest houses.”

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And all this human wretchedness was the elaborate work of one man—one dull, heartless bigot, living, far away, a life of laborious ease and solemn sensuality; and, in reality, almost as much removed from these fellow-creatures of his, whom he called his subjects, as if he had been the inhabitant of another planet. Has history many more instructive warnings against the horrors of arbitrary government—against the folly of mankind in ever tolerating the rule of a single irresponsible individual, than the lesson furnished by the life-work of that crowned criminal, Philip the Second?

The longing for peace on the part of these unfortunate obedient Flemings was intense. Incessant cries for peace reached the ears of the envoys on every side. Alas, it would have been better for these peace-wishers, had they stood side by side with their brethren, the noble Hollanders and Zeelanders, when they had been wresting, if not peace, yet independence and liberty, from Philip, with their own right hands. Now the obedient Flemings were but fuel for the vast flame which the monarch was kindling for the destruction of Christendom—if all Christendom were not willing to accept his absolute dominion.

The burgomasters of Ghent—of Ghent, once the powerful, the industrious, the opulent, the free, of all cities in the world now the most abject and forlorn—came in the morning to wait upon Elizabeth's envoy, and to present him, according to ancient custom, with some flasks of wine. They came with tears streaming down their cheeks, earnestly expressing the desire of their hearts for peace, and their joy that at least it had now "begun to be thought on."

"It is quite true," replied Dr. Dale, "that her excellent Majesty the Queen—filled with compassion for your condition, and having been informed that the Duke of Parma is desirous of peace—has vouchsafed to make this overture. If it take not the desired effect, let not the blame rest upon her, but upon her adversaries." To these words the magistrates all said Amen, and invoked blessings on her Majesty. And most certainly, Elizabeth was sincerely desirous of peace; even at greater sacrifices than the Duke could well have imagined; but there was something almost diabolic in the cold dissimulation by which her honest compassion was mocked, and the tears of a whole people in its agony made the laughingstock of a despot and his tools.

On Saturday morning, Richardot and Garnier waited upon the envoy to escort him to the presence of the Duke. Cecil, who accompanied him, was not much impressed with the grandeur of Alexander's lodgings; and made unfavourable and rather unreasonable comparisons between them and the splendour of Elizabeth's court. They passed through an ante-chamber into a dining-room, thence into an inner chamber, and next into the Duke's room. In the ante-chamber stood Sir William Stanley, the Deventer traitor, conversing with one Mockett, an Englishman, long resident in



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Flanders. Stanley was meanly dressed, in the Spanish fashion, and as young Cecil, passing through the chamber, looked him in the face, he abruptly turned from him, and pulled his hat over his eyes. "Twas well he did so," said that young gentleman, "for his taking it off would hardly have cost me mine." Cecil was informed that Stanley was to have a commandery of Malta, and was in good favour with the Duke, who was, however, quite weary of his mutinous and disorderly Irish regiment.

In the bed-chamber, Farnese—accompanied by the Marquis del Guasto, the Marquis of Renty, the Prince of Aremberg, President Richardot, and Secretary Cosimo—received the envoy and his companion. "Small and mean was the furniture of the chamber," said Cecil; "and although they attribute this to his love of privacy, yet it is a sign that peace is the mother of all honour and state, as may best be perceived by the court of England, which her Majesty's royal presence doth so adorn, as that it exceedeth this as far as the sun surpasseth in light the other stars of the firmament."

Here was a compliment to the Queen and her upholsterers drawn in by the ears. Certainly, if the first and best fruit of the much-longed-for peace were only to improve the furniture of royal and ducal apartments, it might be as well perhaps for the war to go on, while the Queen continued to outshine all the stars in the firmament. But the budding courtier and statesman knew that a personal compliment to Elizabeth could never be amiss or ill-timed.

The envoy delivered the greetings of her Majesty to the Duke, and was heard with great attention. Alexander attempted a reply in French, which was very imperfect, and, apologizing, exchanged that tongue for Italian. He alluded with great fervour to the "honourable opinion concerning his sincerity and word," expressed to him by her Majesty, through the mouth of her envoy. "And indeed," said he, "I have always had especial care of keeping my word. My body and service are at the commandment of the King, my lord and master, but my honour is my own, and her Majesty may be assured that I shall always have especial regard of my word to so great and famous a Queen as her Majesty."

The visit was one of preliminaries and of ceremony. Nevertheless Farnese found opportunity to impress the envoy and his companions with his sincerity of heart. He conversed much with Cecil, making particular and personal inquiries, and with appearance of deep interest, in regard to Queen Elizabeth.

"There is not a prince in the world—" he said, "reserving all question between her Majesty and my royal master—to whom I desire more to do service. So much have I heard of her perfections, that I wish earnestly that things might so fall out, as that it might be my fortune to look upon her face before my return to my own country. Yet I

desire to behold her, not as a servant to him who is not able still to maintain war, or as one that



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feared any harm that might befall him; for in such matters my account was made long ago, to endure all which God may send. But, in truth, I am weary to behold the miserable estate of this people, fallen upon them through their own folly, and methinks that he who should do the best offices of peace would perform a 'pium et sanctissimum opus.' Right glad am I that the Queen is not behind me in zeal for peace." He then complimented Cecil in regard to his father, whom he understood to be the principal mover in these negotiations.

The young man expressed his thanks, and especially for the good affection which the Duke had manifested to the Queen and in the blessed cause of peace. He was well aware that her Majesty esteemed him a prince of great honour and virtue, and that for this good work, thus auspiciously begun, no man could possibly doubt that her Majesty, like himself, was most zealously affected to bring all things to a perfect peace.

The matters discussed in this first interview were only in regard to the place to be appointed for the coming conferences, and the exchange of powers. The Queen's commissioners had expected to treat at Ostend. Alexander, on the contrary, was unable to listen to such a suggestion, as it would be utter dereliction of his master's dignity to send envoys to a city of his own, now in hostile occupation by her Majesty's forces. The place of conference, therefore, would be matter of future consideration. In respect to the exchange of powers, Alexander expressed the hope that no man would doubt as to the production on his commissioners' part of ample authority both from himself and from the King.

Yet it will be remembered, that, at this moment, the Duke had not only no powers from the King, but that Philip had most expressly refused to send a commission, and that he fully expected the negotiation to be superseded by the invasion, before the production of the powers should become indispensable.

And when Farnese was speaking thus fervently in favour of peace, and parading his word and his honour, the letters lay in his cabinet in that very room, in which Philip expressed his conviction that his general was already in London, that the whole realm of England was already at the mercy of a Spanish soldiery, and that the Queen, upon whose perfection Alexander had so long yearned to gaze, was a discrowned captive, entirely in her great enemy's power.

Thus ended the preliminary interview. On the following Monday, 11th March, Dr. Dale and his attendants made the best of their way back to Ostend, while young Cecil, with a safe conduct from Champagne, set forth on a little tour in Flanders.

The journey from Ghent to Antwerp was easy, and he was agreeably surprised by the apparent prosperity of the country. At intervals of every few miles; he was refreshed



with the spectacle of a gibbet well garnished with dangling freebooters; and rejoiced, therefore, in comparative security. For it seemed that the energetic bailiff of Waasland had levied a contribution upon the proprietors of the country, to be expended mainly in hanging brigands; and so well had the funds been applied, that no predatory bands could make their appearance but they were instantly pursued by soldiers, and hanged forthwith, without judge or trial. Cecil counted twelve such places of execution on his road between Ghent and Antwerp.

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On his journey he fell in with an Italian merchant,—Lanfranchi by name, of a great commercial house in Antwerp, in the days when Antwerp had commerce, and by him, on his arrival the same evening in that town, he was made an honoured guest, both for his father's sake and his Queen's. "Tis the pleasantest city that ever I saw," said Cecil, "for situation and building; but utterly left and abandoned now by those rich merchants that were wont to frequent the place."

His host was much interested in the peace-negotiations, and indeed, through his relations with Champagny and Andreas de Loo, had been one of the instruments by which it had been commenced. He inveighed bitterly against the Spanish captains and soldiers, to whose rapacity and ferocity he mainly ascribed the continuance of the war;—and he was especially incensed with Stanley and other—English renegades, who were thought fiercer haters of England than were the Spaniards themselves: Even in the desolate and abject condition of Antwerp and its neighbourhood, at that moment, the quick eye of Cecil detected the latent signs of a possible splendour. Should peace be restored, the territory once more be tilled, and the foreign merchants attracted thither again, he believed that the governor of the obedient Netherlands might live there in more magnificence than the King of Spain himself, exhausted as were his revenues by the enormous expense of this protracted war: Eight hundred thousand dollars monthly; so Lanfranchi informed Cecil, were the costs of the forces on the footing then established. This, however, was probably an exaggeration, for the royal account books showed a less formidable sum, although a sufficiently large one to appal a less obstinate bigot than Philip. But what to him were the, ruin of the Netherlands; the impoverishment of Spain, and the downfall of her ancient grandeur compared to the glory of establishing the Inquisition in England and Holland?

While at dinner in Lanfranchi's house; Cecil was witness to another characteristic of the times, and one which afforded proof of even more formidable freebooters abroad than those for whom the bailiff of Waasland had erected his gibbets. A canal-boat had left Antwerp for Brussels that morning, and in the vicinity of the latter city had been set upon by a detachment from the English garrison of Bergen-op-Zoom, and captured, with twelve prisoners and a freight of 60,000 florins in money. "This struck the company at the dinner-table all in a dump;" said Cecil. And well it might; for the property mainly belonged to themselves, and they forthwith did their best to have the marauders waylaid on their return. But Cecil, notwithstanding his gratitude for the hospitality of Lanfranchi, sent word next day to the garrison of Bergen of the designs against them, and on his arrival at the place had the satisfaction of being informed by Lord Willoughby that the party had got safe home with their plunder.

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“And, well worthy they are of it,” said young Robert, “considering how far they go for it.”

The traveller, on, leaving Antwerp, proceeded down the river to Bergen-op-Zoom, where he was hospitably entertained by that doughty old soldier Sir William Reade, and met Lord Willoughby, whom he accompanied to Brielle on a visit to the deposed elector Truchsess, then living in that neighbourhood. Cecil—who was not passion’s slave—had small sympathy with the man who could lose a sovereignty for the sake of Agnes Mansfeld. “’Tis a very goodly gentleman,” said he, “well fashioned, and of good speech, for which I must rather praise him than for loving a wife better than so great a fortune as he lost by her occasion.” At Brielle he was handsomely entertained by the magistrates, who had agreeable recollections of his brother Thomas, late governor of that city. Thence he proceeded by way of Delft—which, like all English travellers, he described as “the finest built town that ever he saw”—to the Hague, and thence to Fushing, and so back by sea to Ostend.—He had made the most of his three weeks’ tour, had seen many important towns both in the republic and in the obedient Netherlands, and had conversed with many “tall gentlemen,” as he expressed himself, among the English commanders, having been especially impressed by the heroes of Sluys, Baskerville and that “proper gentleman Francis Vere.”

He was also presented by Lord Willoughby to Maurice of Nassau, and was perhaps not very benignantly received by the young prince. At that particular moment, when Leicester’s deferred resignation, the rebellion of Sonoy in North Holland, founded on a fictitious allegiance to the late governor-general, the perverse determination of the Queen to treat for peace against the advice of all the leading statesmen of the Netherlands, and the sharp rebukes perpetually administered by her, in consequence, to the young stadholder and all his supporters, had not tended to produce the most tender feelings upon their part towards the English government, it was not surprising that the handsome soldier should look askance at the crooked little courtier, whom even the great Queen smiled at while she petted him. Cecil was very angry with Maurice.

“In my life I never saw worse behaviour,” he said, “except it were in one lately come from school. There is neither outward appearance in him of any noble mind nor inward virtue.”

Although Cecil had consumed nearly the whole month of March in his tour, he had been more profitably employed than were the royal commissioners during the same period at Ostend.



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Never did statesmen know better how not to do that which they were ostensibly occupied in doing than Alexander Farnese and his agents, Champagny, Richardot, Jacob Maas, and Gamier. The first pretext by which much time was cleverly consumed was the dispute as to the place of meeting. Doctor Dale had already expressed his desire for Ostend as the place of colloquy. "'Tis a very slow old gentleman, this Doctor Dale," said Alexander; "he was here in the time of Madam my mother, and has also been ambassador at Vienna. I have received him and his attendants with great courtesy, and held out great hopes of peace. We had conversations about the place of meeting. He wishes Ostend: I object. The first conference will probably be at some point between that place and Newport."

The next opportunity for discussion and delay was afforded by the question of powers. And it must be ever borne in mind that Alexander was daily expecting the arrival of the invading fleets and armies of Spain, and was holding himself in readiness to place himself at their head for the conquest of England. This was, of course, so strenuously denied by himself and those under his influence, that Queen Elizabeth implicitly believed him, Burghley was lost in doubt, and even the astute Walsingham began to distrust his own senses. So much strength does a falsehood acquire in determined and skilful hands.

"As to the commissions, it will be absolutely necessary for, your Majesty to send them," wrote Alexander at the moment when he was receiving the English envoy at Ghent, "for unless the Armada arrive soon—it will be indispensable for me, to have them, in order to keep the negotiation alive. Of course they will never broach the principal matters without exhibition of powers. Richardot is aware of the secret which your Majesty confided to me, namely, that the negotiations are only intended to deceive the Queen and to gain time for the fleet; but the powers must be sent in order that we may be able to produce them; although your secret intentions will be obeyed."

The Duke commented, however, on the extreme difficulty of carrying out the plan, as originally proposed. "The conquest of England would have been difficult," he said, "even although the country had been taken by surprise. Now they are strong and armed; we are comparatively weak. The danger and the doubt are great; and the English deputies, I think, are really desirous of peace. Nevertheless I am at your Majesty's disposition—life and all—and probably, before the answer arrives to this letter, the fleet will have arrived, and I shall have undertaken the passage to England."



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After three weeks had thus adroitly been frittered away, the English commissioners became somewhat impatient, and despatched Doctor Rogers to the Duke at Ghent. This was extremely obliging upon their part, for if Valentine Dale were a “slow old gentleman,” he was keen, caustic, and rapid, as compared to John Rogers. A formalist and a pedant, a man of red tape and routine, full of precedents and declamatory commonplaces which he mistook for eloquence, honest as daylight and tedious as a king, he was just the time-consumer for Alexander’s purpose. The wily Italian listened with profound attention to the wise saws in which the excellent diplomatist revelled, and his fine eyes often filled with tears at the Doctor’s rhetoric.

Three interviews—each three mortal hours long—did the two indulge in at Ghent, and never, was high-commissioner better satisfied with himself than was John Rogers upon those occasions. He carried every point; he convinced, he softened, he captivated the great Duke; he turned the great Duke round his finger. The great Duke smiled, or wept, or fell into his arms, by turns. Alexander’s military exploits had rung through the world, his genius for diplomacy and statesmanship had never been disputed; but his talents as a light comedian were, in these interviews, for the first time fully revealed.

On the 26th March the learned Doctor made his first bow and performed his first flourish of compliments at Ghent. “I assure your Majesty,” said he, “his Highness followed my compliments of entertainment with so much honour, as that—his Highness or I, speaking of the Queen of England—he never did less than uncover his head; not covering the same, unless I was covered also.” And after these salutations had at last been got through with, thus spake the Doctor of Laws to the Duke of Parma:—

“Almighty God, the light of lights, be pleased to enlighten the understanding of your Alteza, and to direct the same to his glory, to the uniting of both their Majesties and the finishing of these most bloody wars, whereby these countries, being in the highest degree of misery desolate, lie as it were prostrate before the wrathful presence of the most mighty God, most lamentably beseeching his Divine Majesty to withdraw his scourge of war from them, and to move the hearts of princes to restore them unto peace, whereby they might attain unto their ancient flower and dignity. Into the hands of your Alteza are now the lives of many thousands, the destruction of cities, towns, and countries, which to put to the fortune of war how perilous it were, I pray consider. Think ye, ye see the mothers left alive tendering their offspring in your presence, ‘nam matribus detestata bells,’” continued the orator. “Think also of others of all sexes, ages, and conditions, on their knees before your Alteza, most humbly praying and crying most dolorously to spare their lives, and save their property from the ensanguined scourge of the insane soldiers,” and so on, and so on.



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Now Philip II. was slow in resolving, slower in action. The ponderous three-deckers of Biscay were notoriously the dullest sailers ever known, nor were the fettered slaves who rowed the great galleys of Portugal or of Andalusia very brisk in their movements; and yet the King might have found time to marshal his ideas and his squadrons, and the Armada had leisure to circumnavigate the globe and invade England afterwards, if a succession of John Rogerses could have entertained his Highness with compliments while the preparations were making.

But Alexander—at the very outset of the Doctor's eloquence—found it difficult to suppress his feelings. "I can assure your Majesty," said Rogers, "that his eyes—he has a very large eye—were moistened. Sometimes they were thrown upward to heaven, sometimes they were fixed full upon me, sometimes they were cast downward, well declaring how his heart was affected."

Honest John even thought it necessary to mitigate the effect of his rhetoric, and to assure his Highness that it was, after all, only he Doctor Rogers, and not the minister plenipotentiary of the Queen's most serene Majesty, who was exciting all this emotion.

"At this part of my speech," said he, "I prayed his Highness not to be troubled, for that the same only proceeded from Doctor Rogers, who, it might please him to know, was so much moved with the pitiful case of these countries, as also that which of war was sure to ensue, that I wished, if my body were full of rivers of blood, the same to be poured forth to satisfy any that were blood-thirsty, so there might an assured peace follow."

His Highness, at any rate, manifesting no wish to drink of such sanguinary streams—even had the Doctor's body contained them—Rogers became calmer. He then descended from rhetoric to jurisprudence and casuistry, and argued at intolerable length the propriety of commencing the conferences at Ostend, and of exhibiting mutually the commissions.

It is quite unnecessary to follow him as closely as did Farnese. When he had finished the first part of his oration, however, and was "addressing himself to the second point," Alexander at last interrupted the torrent of his eloquence.

"He said that my divisions and subdivisions," wrote the Doctor, "were perfectly in his remembrance, and that he would first answer the first point, and afterwards give audience to the second, and answer the same accordingly."

Accordingly Alexander put on his hat, and begged the envoy also to be covered. Then, "with great gravity, as one inwardly much moved," the Duke took up his part in the dialogue.

"Signor Ruggieri," said he, "you have propounded unto me speeches of two sorts: the one proceeds from Doctor Ruggieri, the other from the lord ambassador of the most



serene Queen of England. Touching the first, I do give you my hearty thanks for your godly speeches, assuring you that though, by reason I have always followed the wars, I cannot be ignorant of the calamities by you alleged, yet you have so truly represented the same before mine eyes as to effectuate in me at this instant, not only the confirmation of mine own disposition to have peace, but also an assurance that this treaty shall take good and speedy end, seeing that it hath pleased God to raise up such a good instrument as you are.”



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“Many are the causes,” continued the Duke, “which, besides my disposition, move me to peace. My father and mother are dead; my son is a young prince; my house has truly need of my presence. I am not ignorant how ticklish a thing is the fortune of war, which—how victorious soever I have been—may in one moment not only deface the same, but also deprive me of my life. The King, my master, is now, stricken in years, his children are young, his dominions in trouble. His desire is to live, and to leave his posterity in quietness. The glory of God, the honor of both their Majesties, and the good of these countries, with the stay of the effusion of Christian blood, and divers other like reasons, force him to peace.”

Thus spoke Alexander, like an honest Christian gentleman, avowing the most equitable and pacific dispositions on the part of his master and himself. Yet at that moment he knew that the Armada was about to sail, that his own nights and days were passed in active preparations for war, and that no earthly power could move Philip by one hair’s-breadth from his purpose to conquer England that summer.

It would be superfluous to follow the Duke or the Doctor through their long dialogue on the place of conference, and the commissions. Alexander considered it “infamy” on his name if he should send envoys to a place of his master’s held by the enemy. He was also of opinion that it was unheard of to exhibit commissions previous to a preliminary colloquy.

Both propositions were strenuously contested by Rogers. In regard to the second point in particular, he showed triumphantly, by citations from the “Polonians, Prussians, and Lithuanians,” that commissions ought to be previously exhibited. But it was not probable that even the Doctor’s learning and logic would persuade Alexander to produce his commission; because, unfortunately, he had no commission to produce. A comfortable argument on the subject, however, would, none the less, consume time.

Three hours of this work brought them, exhausted and hungry; to the hour of noon and of dinner Alexander, with profuse and smiling thanks for the envoy’s plain dealing and eloquence, assured him that there would have been peace long ago “had Doctor Rogers always been the instrument,” and regretted that he was himself not learned enough to deal creditably with him. He would, however, send Richardot to bear him company at table, and chop logic with him afterwards.

Next day, at the same, hour, the Duke and Doctor had another encounter. So soon as the envoy made his appearance, he found himself “embraced most cheerfully and familiarly by his Alteza,” who, then entering at once into business, asked as to the Doctor’s second point.

The Doctor answered with great alacrity.



“Certain expressions have been reported to her Majesty,” said he, “as coming both from your Highness and from Richardot, hinting at a possible attempt by the King of Spain’s forces against the Queen. Her Majesty, gathering that you are going about belike to terrify her, commands me to inform you very clearly and very expressly that she does not deal so weakly in her government, nor so improvidently, but that she is provided for anything that might be attempted against her by the King, and as able to offend him as he her Majesty.”



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Alexander—with a sad countenance, as much offended, his eyes declaring discontentment—asked who had made such a report.

“Upon the honour of a gentleman,” said he, “whoever has said this has much abused me, and evil acquitted himself. They who know me best are aware that it is not my manner to let any word pass my lips that might offend any prince.” Then, speaking most solemnly, he added, “I declare really and truly (which two words he said in Spanish), that I know not of any intention of the King of Spain against her Majesty or her realm.”

At that moment the earth did not open—year of portents though it was— and the Doctor, “singularly rejoicing” at this authentic information from the highest source, proceeded cheerfully with the conversation.

“I hold myself,” he exclaimed, “the man most satisfied in the world, because I may now write to her Majesty that I have heard your Highness upon your honour use these words.”

“Upon my honour, it is true,” repeated the Duke; “for so honourably do I think of her Majesty, as that, after the King, my master, I would honour and serve her before any prince in Christendom.” He added many earnest asseverations of similar import.

“I do not deny, however,” continued Alexander, “that I have heard of certain ships having been armed by the King against that Draak”—he pronounced the “a” in Drake’s name very broadly, or Doric” who has committed so many outrages; but I repeat that I have never heard of any design against her Majesty or against England.”

The Duke then manifested much anxiety to know by whom he had been so misrepresented. “There has been no one with me but Dr. Dale,” said, he, “and I marvel that he should thus wantonly have injured me.”

“Dr. Dale,” replied Ropers, “is a man of honour, of good years, learned, and well experienced; but perhaps he unfortunately misapprehended some of your Alteza’s words, and thought himself bound by his allegiance strictly to report them to her Majesty.”

“I grieve that I should be misrepresented and injured,” answered Farnese, “in a manner so important to my honour. Nevertheless, knowing the virtues with which her Majesty is endued, I assure myself that the protestations I am now making will entirely satisfy her.”

He then expressed the fervent hope that the holy work of negotiation now commencing would result in a renewal of the ancient friendship between the Houses of Burgundy and of England, asserting that “there had never been so favourable a time as the present.”

Under former governments of the Netherlands there had been many mistakes and misunderstandings.



“The Duke of Alva,” said he, “has learned by this time, before the judgment-seat of God, how he discharged his functions, succeeding as he did my mother, the Duchess of Parma who left the Provinces in so flourishing a condition. Of this, however, I will say no more, because of a feud between the Houses of Farnese and of Alva. As for Requesens, he was a good fellow, but didn’t understand his business. Don John of Austria again, whose soul I doubt not is in heaven, was young and poor, and disappointed in all his designs; but God has never offered so great a hope of assured peace as might now be accomplished by her Majesty.”



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Finding the Duke in so fervent and favourable a state of mind, the envoy renewed his demand that at least the first meeting of the commissioners might be held at Ostend.

“Her Majesty finds herself so touched in honour upon this point, that if it be not conceded—as I doubt not it will be, seeing the singular forwardness of your Highness”—said the artful Doctor with a smile, “we are no less than commanded to return to her Majesty’s presence.”

“I sent Richardot to you yesterday,” said Alexander; “did he not content you?”

“Your Highness, no,” replied Ropers. “Moreover her Majesty sent me to your Alteza, and not to Richardot. And the matter is of such importance that I pray you to add to all your graces and favours heaped upon me, this one of sending your commissioners to Ostend.”

His Highness could hold out no longer; but suddenly catching the Doctor in his arms, and hugging him “in most honourable and amiable manner,” he cried—

“Be contented, be cheerful; my lord ambassador. You shall be satisfied upon this point also.”

“And never did envoy depart;” cried the lord ambassador, when he could get his breath, “more bound to you; and more resolute to speak honour of your Highness than I do.”

“To-morrow we will ride together towards Bruges;” said the Duke, in conclusion. “Till then farewell.”

Upon, this he again heartily embraced the envoy, and the friends parted for the day.

Next morning; 28th March, the Duke, who was on his way to Bruges and Sluys to look after his gun-boats, and, other naval, and military preparations, set forth on horseback, accompanied by the Marquis del Vasto, and, for part of the way, by Rogers.

They conversed on the general topics of the approaching negotiations; the Duke, expressing the opinion that the treaty of peace would be made short work with; for it only needed to renew the old ones between the Houses of England and Burgundy. As for the Hollanders and Zeelanders, and their accomplices, he thought there would be no cause of stay on their account; and in regard to the cautionary towns he felt sure that her Majesty had never had any intention of appropriating them to herself, and would willingly surrender them to the King.

Rogers thought it a good opportunity to put in a word for the Dutchmen; who certainly, would not have thanked him for his assistance at that moment.



“Not, to give offence to your Highness,” he said, “if the Hollanders and Zeelanders, with their confederates, like to come into this treaty, surely your Highness would not object?”

Alexander, who had been riding along quietly during this conversation; with his right, hand, on, his hip, now threw out his arm energetically:

“Let them come into it; let them treat, let them conclude,” he exclaimed, “in the name of Almighty God! I have always been well disposed to peace, and am now more so than ever. I could even, with the loss of my life, be content to have peace made at this time.”



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Nothing more, worthy of commemoration, occurred during this concluding interview; and the envoy took his leave at Bruges, and returned to Ostend.

I have furnished the reader with a minute account of these conversations, drawn entirely, from the original records; not so much because the interviews were in themselves of vital importance; but because they afford a living and breathing example—better than a thousand homilies—of the easy victory which diplomatic or royal mendacity may always obtain over innocence and credulity.

Certainly never was envoy more thoroughly beguiled than the excellent John upon this occasion. Wiser than a serpent, as he imagined himself to be, more harmless than a dove; as Alexander found him, he could not, sufficiently congratulate himself upon the triumphs of his eloquence and his adroitness; and despatched most glowing accounts of his proceedings to the Queen.

His ardour was somewhat damped, however, at receiving a message from her Majesty in reply, which was anything but benignant. His eloquence was not commended; and even his preamble, with its touching allusion to the live mothers tendering their offspring—the passage: which had brought the tears into the large eyes of Alexander—was coldly and cruelly censured.

“Her Majesty can in no sort like such speeches”—so ran the return-despatch—“in which she is made to beg for peace. The King of Spain standeth in as great need of peace as her self; and she doth greatly mislike the preamble of Dr. Rogers in his address to the Duke at Ghent, finding it, in very truth quite fond and vain. I am commanded by a particular letter to let him understand how much her Majesty is offended with him.”

Alexander, on his part, informed his royal master of these interviews, in which there had been so much effusion of sentiment, in very brief fashion.

“Dr. Rogers, one of the Queen’s commissioners, has been here,” he said, “urging me with all his might to let all your Majesty’s deputies go, if only for one hour, to Ostend. I refused, saying, I would rather they should go to England than into a city of your Majesty held by English troops. I told him it ought to be satisfactory that I had offered the Queen, as a lady, her choice of any place in the Provinces, or on neutral ground. Rogers expressed regret for all the, bloodshed and other consequences if the negotiations should fall through for so trifling a cause; the more so as in return for this little compliment to the Queen she would not only restore to your Majesty everything that she holds in the Netherlands, but would assist you to recover the part which remains obstinate. To quiet him and to consume time, I have promised that President Richardot shall go and try to satisfy them. Thus two or three weeks more will be wasted. But at last the time will come for exhibiting the powers. They are very anxious to see mine; and when at last they find I have none, I fear that they will break off the negotiations.”



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Could the Queen have been informed of this voluntary offer on the part of her envoy to give up the cautionary towns, and to assist in reducing the rebellion, she might have used stronger language of rebuke. It is quite possible, however, that Farnese—not so attentively following the Doctor's eloquence as he had appeared to do—had somewhat inaccurately reported the conversations, which, after all, he knew to be of no consequence whatever, except as time-consumers. For Elizabeth, desirous of peace as she was, and trusting to Farnese's sincerity as she was disposed to do, was more sensitive than ever as to her dignity.

"We charge you all," she wrote with her own hand to the commissioners, "that no word he overslipt by them, that may, touch our honour and greatness, that be not answered with good sharp words. I am a king that will be ever known not to fear any but God."

It would have been better, however, had the Queen more thoroughly understood that the day for scolding had quite gone by, and that something sharper than the sharpest words would soon be wanted to protect England and herself from impending doom. For there was something almost gigantic in the frivolities with which weeks and months of such precious time were now squandered. Plenary powers—"commission bastantissima"—from his sovereign had been announced by Alexander as in his possession; although the reader has seen that he had no such powers at all. The mission of Rogers had quieted the envoys at Ostend for a time, and they waited quietly for the visit of Richardot to Ostend, into which the promised meeting of all the Spanish commissioners in that city had dwindled. Meantime there was an exchange of the most friendly amenities between the English and their mortal enemies. Hardly a day passed that La Motte, or Renty, or Aremberg, did not send Lord Derby, or Cobham, or Robert Cecil, a hare, or a pheasant, or a cast of hawks, and they in return sent barrel upon barrel of Ostend oysters, five or six hundred at a time. The Englishmen, too; had it in their power to gratify Alexander himself with English greyhounds, for which he had a special liking. "You would wonder," wrote Cecil to his father, "how fond he is of English dogs." There was also much good preaching among other occupations, at Ostend. "My Lord of Derby's two chaplains," said Cecil, "have seasoned this town better with sermons than it had been before for a year's apace." But all this did not expedite the negotiations, nor did the Duke manifest so much anxiety for colloquies as for greyhounds. So, in an unlucky hour for himself, another "fond and vain" old gentleman—James Croft, the comptroller who had already figured, not much to his credit, in the secret negotiations between the Brussels and English courts—betook himself, unauthorized and alone; to the Duke at Bruges. Here he had an interview very similar in character to that in which John Rogers had been indulged, declared



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to Farnese that the Queen was most anxious for peace, and invited him to send a secret envoy to England, who would instantly have ocular demonstration of the fact. Croft returned as triumphantly as the excellent Doctor had done; averring that there was no doubt as to the immediate conclusion of a treaty. His grounds of belief were very similar to those upon which Rogers had founded his faith. "Tis a weak old man of seventy," said Parma, "with very little sagacity. I am inclined to think that his colleagues are taking him in, that they may the better deceive us. I will see that they do nothing of the kind." But the movement was purely one of the comptroller's own inspiration; for Sir James had a singular facility for getting himself into trouble, and for making confusion. Already, when he had been scarcely a day in Ostend, he had insulted the governor of the place, Sir John Conway, had given him the lie in the hearing of many of his own soldiers, had gone about telling all the world that he had express authority from her Majesty to send him home in disgrace, and that the Queen had called him a fool, and quite unfit for his post. And as if this had not been mischief-making enough, in addition to the absurd De Loo and Bodman negotiations of the previous year, in which he had been the principal actor, he had crowned his absurdities by this secret and officious visit to Ghent. The Queen, naturally very indignant at this conduct, reprehended him severely, and ordered him back to England. The comptroller was wretched. He expressed his readiness to obey her commands, but nevertheless implored his dread sovereign to take merciful consideration of the manifold misfortunes, ruin, and utter undoing, which thereby should fall upon him and his unfortunate family. All this he protested he would "nothing esteem if it tended to her Majesty's pleasure or service," but seeing it should effectuate nothing but to bring the aged carcass of her poor vassal to present decay, he implored compassion upon his hoary hairs, and promised to repair the error of his former proceedings. He avowed that he would not have ventured to disobey for a moment her orders to return, but "that his aged and feeble limbs did not retain sufficient force, without present death, to comply with her commandment." And with that he took to his bed, and remained there until the Queen was graciously pleased to grant him her pardon.

At last, early in May—instead of the visit of Richardot—there was a preliminary meeting of all the commissioners in tents on the sands; within a cannon-shot of Ostend, and between that place and Newport. It was a showy and ceremonious interview, in which no business was transacted. The commissioners of Philip were attended by a body of one hundred and fifty light horse, and by three hundred private gentlemen in magnificent costume. La Motte also came from Newport with one thousand Walloon cavalry while the English Commissioners, on their part were escorted



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from Ostend by an imposing array of English and Dutch troops.' As the territory was Spanish; the dignity of the King was supposed to be preserved, and Alexander, who had promised Dr. Rogers that the first interview should take place within Ostend itself, thought it necessary to apologize to his sovereign for so nearly keeping his word as to send the envoys within cannon-shot of the town. "The English commissioners," said he, "begged with so much submission for this concession, that I thought it as well to grant it."

The Spanish envoys were despatched by the Duke of Parma, well provided with full powers for himself, which were not desired by the English government, but unfurnished with a commission from Philip, which had been pronounced indispensable. There was, therefore, much prancing of cavalry, flourishing of trumpets, and eating of oysters; at the first conference, but not one stroke of business. As the English envoys had now been three whole months in Ostend, and as this was the first occasion on which they had been brought face to face with the Spanish commissioners, it must be confessed that the tactics of Farnese had been masterly. Had the haste in the dock-yards of Lisbon and Cadiz been at all equal to the magnificent procrastination in the council-chambers of Bruges and Ghent, Medina Sidonia might already have been in the Thames.

But although little ostensible business was performed, there was one man who had always an eye to his work. The same servant in plain livery, who had accompanied Secretary Garnier, on his first visit to the English commissioners at Ostend, had now come thither again, accompanied by a fellow-lackey. While the complimentary dinner, offered in the name of the absent Farnese to the Queen's representatives, was going forward, the two menials strayed off together to the downs, for the purpose of rabbit-shooting. The one of them was the same engineer who had already, on the former occasion, taken a complete survey of the fortifications of Ostend; the other was no less a personage than the Duke of Parma himself. The pair now made a thorough examination of the town and its neighbourhood, and, having finished their reconnoitring, made the best of their way back to Bruges. As it was then one of Alexander's favourite objects to reduce the city of Ostend, at the earliest possible moment, it must be allowed that this preliminary conference was not so barren to himself as it was to the commissioners. Philip, when informed of this manoeuvre, was naturally gratified at such masterly duplicity, while he gently rebuked his nephew for exposing his valuable life; and certainly it would have been an inglorious termination to the Duke's splendid career; had he been hanged as a spy within the trenches of Ostend. With the other details of this first diplomatic colloquy Philip was delighted. "I see you understand me thoroughly," he said. "Keep the negotiation alive till my Armada appears, and then carry out my determination, and replant the Catholic religion on the soil of England."



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The Queen was not in such high spirits. She was losing her temper very fast, as she became more and more convinced that she had been trifled with. No powers had been yet exhibited, no permanent place of conference fixed upon, and the cessation of arms demanded by her commissioners for England, Spain, and all the Netherlands, was absolutely refused. She desired her commissioners to inform the Duke of Parma that it greatly touched his honour—as both before their coming and afterwards, he had assured her that he had ‘comision bastantissima’ from his sovereign—to clear himself at once from the imputation of insincerity. “Let not the Duke think,” she wrote with her own hand, “that we would so long time endure these many frivolous and unkindly dealings, but that we desire all the world to know our desire of a kingly peace, and that we will endure no more the like, nor any, but will return you from your charge.”

Accordingly—by her Majesty’s special command—Dr. Dale made another visit to Bruges, to discover, once for all, whether there was a commission from Philip or not; and, if so, to see it with his own eyes. On the 7th May he had an interview with the Duke. After thanking his Highness for the honourable and stately manner in which the conferences had been, inaugurated near Ostend, Dale laid very plainly before him her Majesty’s complaints of the tergiversations and equivocations concerning the commission, which had now lasted three months long.

In answer, Alexander made a complimentary harangue; confining himself entirely to the first part of the envoy’s address, and assuring him in redundant phraseology, that he should hold himself very guilty before the world, if he had not surrounded the first colloquy between the plenipotentiaries of two such mighty princes, with as much pomp as the circumstances of time and place would allow. After this superfluous rhetoric had been poured forth, he calmly dismissed the topic which Dr. Dale had come all the way from. Ostend to discuss, by carelessly observing that President Richardot would confer with him on the subject of the commission.

“But,” said the envoy, “tis no matter of conference or dispute. I desire simply to see the commission.”

“Richardot and Champagny shall deal with you in the afternoon,” repeated Alexander; and with this reply, the Doctor was fair to be contented.

Dale then alluded to the point of cessation of arms.

“Although,” said he, “the Queen might justly require that the cessation should be general for all the King’s dominion, yet in order not to stand on precise points, she is content that it should extend no further than to the towns of Flushing; Brief, Ostend, and Bergen-op-Zoom.”

“To this he said nothing,” wrote the envoy, “and so I went no further.”



In the afternoon Dale had conference with Champagny and Richardot. As usual, Champagny was bound hand and foot by the gout, but was as quick-witted and disputatious as ever. Again Dale made an earnest harangue, proving satisfactorily—as if any proof were necessary on such a point— that a commission from Philip ought to be produced, and that a commission had been promised, over and over again.



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After a pause, both the representatives of Parma began to wrangle with the envoy in very insolent fashion. "Richardot is always their mouth-piece," said Dale, "only Champagny choppeth in at every word, and would do so likewise in ours if we would suffer it."

"We shall never have done with these impertinent demands," said the President. "You ought to be satisfied with the Duke's promise of ratification contained in his commission. We confess what you say concerning the former requisitions and promises to be true, but when will you have done? Have we not showed it to Mr. Croft, one of your own colleagues? And if we show it you now, another may come to-morrow, and so we shall never have an end."

"The delays come from yourselves," roundly replied the Englishman, "for you refuse to do what in reason and law you are bound to do. And the more demands the more 'mora aut potius culpa' in you. You, of all men, have least cause to hold such language, who so confidently and even disdainfully answered our demand for the commission, in Mr. Cecil's presence, and promised to show a perfect one at the very first meeting. As for Mr. Comptroller Croft, he came hither without the command of her Majesty and without the knowledge of his colleagues."

Richardot then began to insinuate that, as Croft had come without authority, so—for aught they could tell—might Dale also. But Champagny here interrupted, protested that the president was going too far, and begged him to show the commission without further argument.

Upon this Richardot pulled out the commission from under his gown, and placed it in Dr. Dale's hands!

It was dated 17th April, 1588, signed and sealed by the King, and written in French, and was to the effect, that as there had been differences between her Majesty and himself; as her Majesty had sent ambassadors into the Netherlands, as the Duke of Parma had entered into treaty with her Majesty, therefore the King authorised the Duke to appoint commissioners to treat, conclude, and determine all controversies and misunderstandings, confirmed any such appointments already made, and promised to ratify all that might be done by them in the premises.'

Dr. Dale expressed his satisfaction with the tenor of this document, and begged to be furnished with a copy of it, but his was peremptorily refused. There was then a long conversation—ending, as usual, in nothing—on the two other points, the place for the conferences, namely, and the cessation of arms.

Nest morning Dale, in taking leave of the Duke of Parma, expressed the gratification which he felt, and which her Majesty was sure to feel at the production of the



commission. It was now proved, said the envoy, that the King was as earnestly in favour of peace as the Duke was himself.

Dale then returned, well satisfied, to Ostend.

In truth the commission had arrived just in time. "Had I not received it soon enough to produce it then," said Alexander, "the Queen would have broken off the negotiations. So I ordered Richardot, who is quite aware of your Majesty's secret intentions, from which we shall not swerve one jot, to show it privately to Croft, and afterwards to Dr. Dale, but without allowing a copy of it to be taken."

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“You have done very well,” replied Philip, “but that commission is, on no account, to be used, except for show. You know my mind thoroughly.”

Thus three months had been consumed, and at last one indispensable preliminary to any negotiation had, in appearance, been performed. Full powers on both sides had been exhibited. When the Queen of England gave the Earl of Derby and his colleagues commission to treat with the King’s envoys, and pledged herself beforehand to, ratify all their proceedings, she meant to perform the promise to which she had affixed her royal name and seal. She could not know that the Spanish monarch was deliberately putting his name to a lie, and chuckling in secret over the credulity of his English sister, who was willing to take his word and his bond. Of a certainty the English were no match for southern diplomacy.

But Elizabeth was now more impatient than ever that the other two preliminaries should be settled, the place of conferences, and the armistice.

“Be plain with the Duke,” she wrote to her envoys, “that we have tolerated so many weeks in tarrying a commission, that I will never endure more delays. Let him know he deals with a prince who prizes her honour more than her life: Make yourselves such as stand of your reputations.”

Sharp words, but not sharp enough to prevent a further delay of a month; for it was not till the 6th June that the commissioners at last came together at Bourbourg, that “miserable little hole,” on the coast between Ostend and Newport, against which Gamier had warned them. And now there was ample opportunity to wrangle at full length on the next preliminary, the cessation of arms. It would be superfluous to follow the altercations step by step—for negotiations there were none—and it is only for the sake of exhibiting at full length the infamy of diplomacy, when diplomacy is unaccompanied by honesty, that we are hanging up this series of pictures at all. Those bloodless encounters between credulity and vanity upon one side, and gigantic fraud on the other, near those very sands of Newport, and in sight of the Northern Ocean, where, before long, the most terrible battles, both by land and sea, which the age had yet witnessed, were to occur, are quite as full of instruction and moral as the most sanguinary combats ever waged.

At last the commissioners exchanged copies of their respective powers. After four months of waiting and wrangling, so much had been achieved— a show of commissions and a selection of the place for conference. And now began the long debate about the cessation of arms. The English claimed an armistice for the whole dominion of Philip and Elizabeth respectively, during the term of negotiation, and for twenty days after. The Spanish would grant only a temporary truce, terminable at six days’ notice, and that only for the four cautionary towns of Holland held by the Queen. Thus Philip would be free



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to invade England at his leisure out of the obedient Netherlands or Spain. This was inadmissible, of course, but a week was spent at the outset in reducing the terms to writing; and when the Duke's propositions were at last produced in the French tongue, they were refused by the Queen's commissioners, who required that the documents should be in Latin. Great was the triumph of Dr. Dale, when, after another interval, he found their Latin full of barbarisms and blunders, at which a school-boy would have blushed. The King's commissioners, however, while halting in their syntax, had kept steadily to their point.

"You promised a general cessation of aims at our coming," said Dale, at a conference on the 2/12 June, "and now ye have lingered five times twenty days, and nothing done at all. The world may see the delays come of you and not of us, and that ye are not so desirous of peace as ye pretend."

"But as far your invasion of England," stoutly observed the Earl of Derby, "ye shall find it hot coming thither. England was never so ready in any former age,—neither by sea nor by land; but we would show your unreasonableness in proposing a cessation of arms by which ye would bind her Majesty to forbear touching all the Low Countries, and yet leave yourselves at liberty to invade England."

While they were thus disputing, Secretary Gamier rushed into the room, looking very much frightened, and announced that Lord Henry Seymour's fleet of thirty-two ships of war was riding off Gravelines, and that he had sent two men on shore who were now waiting in the ante-chamber.

The men being accordingly admitted, handed letters to the English commissioners from Lord Henry, in which he begged to be informed in what terms they were standing, and whether they needed his assistance or countenance in the cause in which they were engaged. The envoys found his presence very "comfortable," as it showed the Spanish commissioners that her Majesty was so well provided as to make a cessation of arms less necessary to her than it was to the King. They therefore sent their thanks to the Lord Admiral, begging him to cruise for a time off Dunkirk and its neighbourhood, that both their enemies and their friends might have a sight of the English ships.

Great was the panic all along the coast at this unexpected demonstration. The King's commissioners got into their coaches, and drove down to the coast to look at the fleet, and—so soon as they appeared—were received with such a thundering cannonade an hour long, by way of salute, as to convince them, in the opinion of the English envoys, that the Queen had no cause to be afraid of any enemies afloat or ashore.



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But these noisy arguments were not much more effective than the interchange of diplomatic broadsides which they had for a moment superseded. The day had gone by for blank cartridges and empty protocols. Nevertheless Lord Henry's harmless thunder was answered, the next day, by a "Quintuplication" in worse Latin than ever, presented to Dr. Dale and his colleagues by Richardot and Champagny, on the subject of the armistice. And then there was a return quintuplication, in choice Latin, by the classic Dale, and then there was a colloquy on the quintuplication, and everything that had been charged, and truly charged, by the English; was now denied by the King's commissioners; and Champagny—more gouty and more irascible than ever—"chopped in" at every word spoken by King's envoys or Queen's, contradicted everybody, repudiated everything said or done by Andrew de Loo, or any of the other secret negotiators during the past year, declared that there never had been a general cessation of arms promised, and that, at any rate, times were now changed, and such an armistice was inadmissible! Then the English answered with equal impatience, and reproached the King's representatives with duplicity and want of faith, and censured them for their unseemly language, and begged to inform Champagny and Richardot that they had not then to deal with such persons as they might formerly have been in the habit of treating withal, but with a "great prince who did justify the honour of her actions," and they confuted the positions now assumed by their opponents with official documents and former statements from those very opponents' lips. And then, after all this diplomatic and rhetorical splutter, the high commissioners recovered their temper and grew more polite, and the King's "envoys excused themselves in a mild, merry manner," for the rudeness of their speeches, and the Queen's envoys accepted their apologies with majestic urbanity, and so they separated for the day in a more friendly manner than they had done the day before.'

"You see to what a scholar's shift we have been driven for want of resolution," said Valentine Dale. "If we should linger here until there should be broken heads, in what case we should be God knoweth. For I can trust Champagny and Richardot no farther than I can see them."

And so the whole month of June passed by; the English commissioners "leaving no stone unturned to get a quiet cessation of arms in general terms," and being constantly foiled; yet perpetually kept in hope that the point would soon be carried. At the same time the signs of the approaching invasion seemed to thicken. "In my opinion," said Dale, "as Phormio spake in matters of wars, it were very requisite that my Lord Harry should be always on this coast, for they will steal out from hence as closely as they can, either to join with the Spanish navy or to land, and they may be very easily scattered, by God's grace." And, with the honest pride of a protocol-maker, he added, "our postulates do trouble the King's commissioners very much, and do bring them to despair."



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The excellent Doctor had not even yet discovered that the King's commissioners were delighted with his postulates; and that to have kept them postulating thus five months in succession, while naval and military preparations were slowly bringing forth a great event—which was soon to strike them with as much amazement as if the moon had fallen out of heaven—was one of the most decisive triumphs ever achieved by Spanish diplomacy. But the Doctor thought that his logic had driven the King of Spain to despair.

At the same time he was not insensible to the merits of another and more peremptory style of rhetoric,—“I pray you,” said he to Walsingham, “let us hear some arguments from my Lord Harry out of her Majesty's navy now and then. I think they will do more good than any bolt that we can shoot here. If they be met with at their going out, there is no possibility for them to make any resistance, having so few men that can abide the sea; for the rest, as you know, must be sea-sick at first.”

But the envoys were completely puzzled. Even at the beginning of July, Sir James Croft was quite convinced of the innocence of the King and the Duke; but Croft was in his dotage. As for Dale, he occasionally opened his eyes, and his ears, but more commonly kept them well closed to the significance of passing events; and consoled himself with his protocols and his classics, and the purity of his own Latin.

“'Tis a very wise saying of Terence,” said he, “omnibus nobis ut res dant sese; ita magni aut humiles sumus.’ When the King's commissioners hear of the King's navy from Spain, they are in such jollity that they talk loud In the mean time—as the wife of Bath sath in Chaucer by her husband, we owe them not a word. If we should die tomorrow; I hope her Majesty will find by our writings that the honour of the cause, in the opinion of the world, must be with her Majesty; and that her commissioners are, neither of such imperfection in their reasons, or so barbarous in language, as they who fail not, almost in every line, of some barbarism not to be borne in a grammar-school, although in subtleness and impudent affirming of untruths and denying of truths, her commissioners are not in any respect to match with Champagny and Richardot, who are doctors in that faculty.”

It might perhaps prove a matter of indifference to Elizabeth and to England, when the Queen should be a state-prisoner in Spain and the Inquisition quietly established in her kingdom, whether the world should admit or not, in case of his decease, the superiority of Dr. Dale's logic and latin to those of his antagonists. And even if mankind conceded the best of the argument to the English diplomatists, that diplomacy might seem worthless which could be blind to the colossal falsehoods growing daily before its eyes. Had the commissioners been able to read the secret correspondence between Parma and his master—as we have had the opportunity of doing—they



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would certainly not have left their homes in February, to be made fools of until July; but would, on their knees, have implored their royal mistress to awake from her fatal delusion before it should be too late. Even without that advantage, it seems incredible that they should have been unable to pierce through the atmosphere of duplicity which surrounded them, and to obtain one clear glimpse of the destruction so, steadily advancing upon England.

For the famous bull of Sixtus V. had now been fulminated. Elizabeth had been again denounced as a bastard and usurper, and her kingdom had been solemnly conferred upon Philip, with title of defender of the Christian, faith, to have and to hold as tributary and feudatory of Rome. The so-called Queen had usurped the crown contrary to the ancient treaties between the apostolic stool and the kingdom of England, which country, on its reconciliation with the head of the church after the death of St. Thomas of Canterbury, had recognised the necessity of the Pope's consent in the succession to its throne; she had deserved chastisement for the terrible tortures inflicted by her upon English Catholics and God's own saints; and it was declared an act of virtue, to be repaid with plenary indulgence and forgiveness of all sins, to lay violent hands on the usurper, and deliver her into the hands of the Catholic party. And of the holy league against the usurper, Philip was appointed the head, and Alexander of Parma chief commander. This document was published in large numbers in Antwerp in the English tongue.

The pamphlet of Dr. Allen, just named Cardinal, was also translated in the same city, under the direction of the Duke of Parma, in-order to be distributed throughout England, on the arrival in that kingdom of the Catholic troops. The well-known 'Admonition to the Nobility and People of England and Ireland' accused the Queen of every crime and vice which can pollute humanity; and was filled with foul details unfit for the public eye in these more decent days.

So soon as the intelligence of these publications reached England, the Queen ordered her commissioners at Bourbourg to take instant cognizance of them, and to obtain a categorical explanation on the subject from Alexander himself: as if an explanation were possible, as if the designs of Sixtus, Philip, and Alexander, could any longer be doubted, and as if the Duke were more likely now than before to make a succinct statement of them for the benefit of her Majesty.

"Having discovered," wrote Elizabeth on the 9th July (N.S.), "that this treaty of peace is entertained only to abuse us, and being many ways given to understand that the preparations which have so long been making, and which now are consummated, both in Spain and the Low Countries, are purposely to be employed against us and our country; finding that, for the furtherance of these exploits, there is ready to be published a vile, slanderous, and blasphemous

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book, containing as many lies as lines, entitled, 'An Admonition,' &c., and contrived by a lewd born-subject of ours, now become an arrant traitor, named Dr. Allen, lately made, a cardinal at Rome; as also a bull of the Pope, whereof we send you a copy, both very lately brought into those Low Countries, the one whereof is already printed at Antwerp, in a great multitude; in the English tongue, and the other ordered to be printed, only to stir up our subjects, contrary to the laws of God and their allegiance, to join with such foreign purposes as are prepared against us and our realm, to come out of those Low Countries and out of Spain; and as it appears by the said bull that the Duke of Parma is expressly named and chosen by the Pope and the King of Spain to be principal executioner of these intended enterprises, we cannot think it honourable for us to continue longer the treaty of peace with them that, under colour of treaty, arm themselves with all the power they can to a bloody war."

Accordingly the Queen commanded Dr. Dale, as one of the commissioners, to proceed forthwith to the Duke, in order to obtain explanations as to his contemplated conquest of her realm, and as to his share in the publication of the bull and pamphlet, and to "require him, as he would be accounted a prince of honour, to let her plainly understand what she might think thereof." The envoy was to assure him that the Queen would trust implicitly to his statement, to adjure him to declare the truth, and, in case he avowed the publications and the belligerent intentions suspected, to demand instant safe-conduct to England for her commissioners, who would, of course, instantly leave the Netherlands. On the other hand, if the Duke disavowed those infamous documents, he was to be requested to punish the printers, and have the books burned by the hangman?

Dr. Dale, although suffering from cholic, was obliged to set forth, at once upon what he felt would be a bootless journey. At his return—which was upon the 22nd of July (N.S.) the shrewd old gentleman had nearly arrived at the opinion that her Majesty might as well break off the negotiations. He had a "comfortless voyage and a ticklish message;" found all along the road signs of an approaching enterprise, difficult to be mistaken; reported 10,000 veteran Spaniards, to which force Stanley's regiment was united; 6000 Italians, 3000 Germans, all with pikes, corselets, and slash swords complete; besides 10,000 Walloons. The transports for the cavalry at Gravelingen he did not see, nor was he much impressed with what he heard as to the magnitude of the naval preparations at Newport. He was informed that the Duke was about making a foot-pilgrimage from Brussels to Our Lady of Halle, to implore victory for his banners, and had daily evidence of the soldier's expectation to invade and to "devour England." All this had not tended to cure him of the low spirits with which he began the journey. Nevertheless, although he was unable—as will be seen—to report an entirely satisfactory answer from Farnese to the Queen upon the momentous questions entrusted to him, he, at least, thought of a choice passage in 'The Aeneid,' so very apt to the circumstances, as almost to console him for the "pangs of his cholic" and the terrors of the approaching invasion.



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“I have written two or three verses out of Virgil for the Queen to read,” said he, “which I pray your Lordship to present unto her. God grant her to weigh them. If your Lordship do read the whole discourse of Virgil in that place, it will make your heart melt. Observe the report of the ambassadors that were sent to Diomedes to make war against the Trojans, for the old hatred that he, being a Grecian, did bear unto them; and note the answer of Diomedes dissuading them from entering into war with the Trojans, the perplexity of the King, the miseries of the country, the reasons of Drances that spake against them which would have war, the violent persuasions of Turnus to war; and note, I pray you; one word, ‘nec te ullius violentia frangat.’ What a lecture could I make with Mr. Cecil upon that passage in Virgil!”

The most important point for the reader to remark is the date of this letter. It was received in the very last days of the month of July. Let him observe—as he will soon have occasion to do—the events which were occurring on land and sea, exactly at the moment when this classic despatch reached its destination, and judge whether the hearts of the Queen and Lord Burghley would be then quite at leisure to melt at the sorrows of the Trojan War. Perhaps the doings of Drake and Howard, Medina Sidonia, and Ricalde, would be pressing as much on their attention as the eloquence of Diomedes or the wrath of Turnus. Yet it may be doubted whether the reports of these Grecian envoys might not in truth, be almost as much to the purpose as the despatches of the diplomatic pedant, with his Virgil and his cholic, into whose hands grave matters of peace and war were entrusted in what seemed the day of England’s doom.

“What a lecture I could make with Mr. Cecil on the subject!—“An English ambassador, at the court of Philip II.’s viceroy, could indulge himself in imaginary prelections on the Aeneid, in the last days of July, of the year of our Lord 1588!

The Doctor, however—to do him justice—had put the questions categorically, to his Highness as he had been instructed to do. He went to Bruges so mysteriously; that no living man, that side the sea, save Lord Derby and Lord Cobham, knew the cause of his journey. Poor-puzzling James Croft, in particular, was moved almost to tears, by being kept out of the secret. On the 8/18 July Dale had audience of the Duke at Bruges. After a few commonplaces, he was invited by the Duke to state what special purpose had brought him to Bruges.

“There is a book printed at Antwerp,” said Dale, “and set forth by a fugitive from England, who calleth himself a cardinal.”

Upon this the Duke began diligently to listen.



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“This book,” resumed Dale, “is an admonition to the nobility and people of England and Ireland touching the execution of the sentence of the Pope against the Queen which the King Catholic hath entrusted to your Highness as chief of the enterprise. There is also a bull of the Pope declaring my sovereign mistress illegitimate and an usurper, with other matters too odious for any prince or gentleman to name or hear. In this bull the Pope saith that he hath dealt with the most Catholic King to employ all the means in his power to the deprivation and deposition of my sovereign, and doth charge her subjects to assist the army appointed by the King Catholic for that purpose, under the conduct of your Highness. Therefore her Majesty would be satisfied from your Highness in that point, and will take satisfaction of none other; not doubting but that as you are a prince of word and credit; you will deal plainly with her Majesty. Whatsoever it may be, her Majesty will not take it amiss against your Highness, so she may only be informed by you of the truth. Wherefore I do require you to satisfy the Queen.”

“I am glad,” replied the Duke, “that her Majesty and her commissioners do take in good part my good-will towards them. I am especially touched by the good opinion her Majesty hath of my sincerity, which I should be glad always to maintain. As to the book to which you refer, I have never read it, nor seen it, nor do I take heed of it. It may well be that her Majesty, whom it concerneth, should take notice of it; but, for my part, I have nought to do with it, nor can I prevent men from writing or printing at their pleasure. I am at the commandment of my master only.”

As Alexander made no reference to the Pope's bull, Dr. Dale observed, that if a war had been, of purpose, undertaken at the instance of the Pope, all this negotiation had been in vain, and her Majesty would be obliged to withdraw her commissioners, not doubting that they would receive safe-conduct as occasion should require.

“Yea, God forbid else,” replied Alexander; “and further, I know nothing of any bull of the Pope, nor do I care for any, nor do I undertake anything for him. But as for any misunderstanding (*mal entendu*) between my master and her Majesty, I must, as a soldier, act at the command of my sovereign. For my part, I have always had such respect for her Majesty, being so noble a Queen, as that I would never hearken to anything that might be reproachful to her. After my master, I would do most to serve your Queen, and I hope she will take my word for her satisfaction on that point. And for avoiding of bloodshed and the burning of houses and such other calamities as do follow the wars, I have been a petitioner to my sovereign that all things might be ended quietly by a peace. That is a thing, however,” added the Duke; “which you have more cause to desire than we; for if the King my master, should lose a battle, he would be able to recover it well enough, without harm to himself, being far enough off in Spain, while, if the battle be lost on your side, you may lose kingdom and all.”



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“By God’s sufferance,” rejoined the Doctor, “her Majesty is not without means to defend her crown, that hath descended to her from so long a succession of ancestors. Moreover your Highness knows very well that one battle cannot conquer a kingdom in another country.”

“Well,” said the Duke, “that is in God’s hand.”

“So it is,” said the Doctor.

“But make an end of it,” continued Alexander quietly, “and if you have anything to put into writing; you will do me a pleasure by sending it to me.”

Dr. Valentine Dale was not the man to resist the temptation to make a protocol, and promised one for the next day.

“I am charged only to give your Highness satisfaction,” he said, “as to her Majesty’s sincere intentions, which have already been published to the world in English, French, and Italian, in the hope that you may also satisfy the Queen upon this other point. I am but one of her commissioners, and could not deal without my colleagues. I crave leave to depart to-morrow morning, and with safe-convoy, as I had in coming.”

After the envoy had taken leave, the Duke summoned Andrea de Loo, and related to him the conversation which had taken place. He then, in the presence of that personage, again declared—upon his honour and with very constant affirmations, that he had never seen nor heard of the book—the ‘Admonition’ by Cardinal Allen—and that he knew nothing of any bull, and had no regard to it.’

The plausible Andrew accompanied the Doctor to his lodgings, protesting all the way of his own and his master’s sincerity, and of their unequivocal intentions to conclude a peace. The next day the Doctor, by agreement, brought a most able protocol of demands in the name of all the commissioners of her Majesty; which able protocol the Duke did not at that moment read, which he assuredly never read subsequently, and which no human soul ever read afterwards. Let the dust lie upon it, and upon all the vast heaps of protocols raised mountains high during the spring and summer of 1588.

“Dr. Dale has been with me two or three, times,” said Parma, in giving his account of these interviews to Philip. “I don’t know why he came, but I think he wished to make it appear, by coming to Bruges, that the rupture, when it occurs, was caused by us, not by the English. He has been complaining of Cardinal Allen’s book, and I told him that I didn’t understand a word of English, and knew nothing whatever of the matter.”

It has been already seen that the Duke had declared, on his word of honour, that he had never heard of the famous pamphlet. Yet at that very moment letters were lying in his cabinet, received more than a fortnight before from Philip, in which that monarch

thanked Alexander for having had the Cardinal's book translated at Antwerp! Certainly few English diplomatists could be a match for a Highness so liberal of his word of honour.



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But even Dr. Dale had at last convinced himself—even although the Duke knew nothing of bull or pamphlet—that mischief was brewing against England. The sagacious man, having seen large bodies of Spaniards and Walloons making such demonstrations of eagerness to be led against his country, and “professing it as openly as if they were going to a fair or market,” while even Alexander himself could “no more hide it than did Henry VIII. when he went to Boulogne,” could not help suspecting something amiss.

His colleague, however, Comptroller Croft, was more judicious, for he valued himself on taking a sound, temperate, and conciliatory view of affairs. He was not the man to offend a magnanimous neighbour—who meant nothing unfriendly by regarding his manoeuvres with superfluous suspicion. So this envoy wrote to Lord Burghley on the 2nd August (N.S.)—let the reader mark the date—that, “although a great doubt had been conceived as to the King’s sincerity, . . . yet that discretion and experience induced him—the envoy—to think, that besides the reverent opinion to be had of princes’ oaths, and the general incommmodity which will come by the contrary, God had so balanced princes’ powers in that age, as they rather desire to assure themselves at home, than with danger to invade their neighbours.”

Perhaps the mariners of England—at that very instant exchanging broadsides off the coast of Devon and Dorset with the Spanish Armada, and doing their best to protect their native land from the most horrible calamity which had ever impended over it—had arrived at a less reverent opinion of princes’ oaths; and it was well for England in that supreme hour that there were such men as Howard and Drake, and Winter and Frobisher, and a whole people with hearts of oak to defend her, while bungling diplomatists and credulous dotards were doing their best to imperil her existence.

ETEXT EDITOR’S BOOKMARKS:

Bungling diplomatists and credulous dotards
 Fitter to obey than to command
 Full of precedents and declamatory commonplaces
 I am a king that will be ever known not to fear any but God
 Infamy of diplomacy, when diplomacy is unaccompanied by honesty
 Mendacity may always obtain over innocence and credulity
 Never did statesmen know better how not to do
 Pray here for satiety, (said Cecil) than ever think of variety
 Simple truth was highest skill
 Strength does a falsehood acquire in determined and skilful hand
 That crowned criminal, Philip the Second

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