

# **History of the United Netherlands, 1590a eBook**

## **History of the United Netherlands, 1590a by John Lothrop Motley**

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# Page 1

## Title: History of the United Netherlands, 1590(a)

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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. 61

History of the United Netherlands, 1590(a)

### CHAPTER XXI.

Effect of the Assassination of Henry III.—Concentration of forces for the invasion of France—The Netherlands determine on striking a blow for freedom—Organization of a Dutch army—Stratagem to surprise the castle of Breda—Intrepidity and success of the enterprise.

The dagger of Jacques Clement had done much, and was likely to do more, to change the face of Europe. Another proof was afforded that assassination had become a regular and recognised factor in the political problems of the sixteenth century. Another illustration was exhibited of the importance of the individual—even although that individual was in himself utterly despicable—to the working out of great historical



results. It seemed that the murder of Henry III.—that forlorn caricature of kingship and of manhood—was likely to prove eminently beneficial to the cause of the Netherland commonwealth. Five years earlier, the murder of William the Silent had seemed to threaten its very existence.

For Philip the Prudent, now that France was deprived of a head, conceived that the time had arrived when he might himself assume the sovereignty of that kingdom. While a thing of straw, under the name of Charles X. and shape of a Cardinal Bourbon, was set up to do battle with that living sovereign and soldier, the heretic Bearnese, the Duke of Parma was privately ordered to bend all his energies towards the conquest of the realm in dispute, under pretence of assisting the Holy League.

Accordingly, early in the year 1590, Alexander concentrated a considerable force on the French frontier in Artois and Hainault, apparently threatening Bergen-op-Zoom and other cities in South Holland, but in reality preparing to invade France. The Duke of Mayenne, who had assumed the title of lieutenant-general of that kingdom, had already visited him at Brussels in order to arrange the plan of the campaign.

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While these measures were in preparation, an opportunity was likely to be afforded to the Netherlanders of striking a blow or two for liberty and independence; now that all the force that possibly could be spared was to be withdrawn by their oppressors and to be used for the subjugation of their neighbours. The question was whether there would be a statesman and a soldier ready to make use of this golden opportunity.

There was a statesman ripe and able who, since the death of the Taciturn, had been growing steadily in the estimation of his countrymen and who already was paramount in the councils of the States-General. There was a soldier, still very young, who was possessed of the strongest hereditary claims to the confidence and affection of the United Provinces and who had been passing a studious youth in making himself worthy of his father and his country. Fortunately, too, the statesman and the soldier were working most harmoniously together. John of Olden-Barneveld, with his great experience and vast and steady intellect, stood side by side with young Maurice of Nassau at this important crisis in the history of the new commonwealth.

At length the twig was becoming the tree—'tandem fit surculus arbor'— according to the device assumed by the son of William the Silent after his father's death.

The Netherlands had sore need of a practical soldier to contend with the scientific and professional tyrants against whom they had so long been struggling, and Maurice, although so young, was pre-eminently a practical man. He was no enthusiast; he was no poet. He was at that period certainly no politician. Not often at the age of twenty has a man devoted himself for years to pure mathematics for the purpose of saving his country. Yet this was Maurice's scheme. Four years long and more, when most other youths in his position and at that epoch would have been alternating between frivolous pleasures and brilliant exploits in the field, the young prince had spent laborious days and nights with the learned Simon Stevinus of Bruges. The scientific work which they composed in common, the credit of which the master assigned to the pupil, might have been more justly attributed perhaps to the professor than to the prince, but it is certain that Maurice was an apt scholar.

In that country, ever held in existence by main human force against the elements, the arts of engineering, hydrostatics and kindred branches were of necessity much cultivated. It was reserved for the young mathematician to make them as potent against a human foe.



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Moreover, there were symptoms that the military discipline, learning and practical skill, which had almost made Spain the mistress of the world, were sinking into decay. Farnese, although still in the prime of life, was broken in health, and there seemed no one fit to take the place of himself and his lieutenants when they should be removed from the scene where they had played their parts so consummately. The army of the Netherlands was still to be created. Thus far the contest had been mainly carried on by domestic militia and foreign volunteers or hirelings. The train-bands of the cities were aided in their struggles against Spanish pikemen and artillerymen, Italian and Albanian cavalry by the German riders, whom every little potentate was anxious to sell to either combatant according to the highest bid, and by English mercenaries, whom the love of adventure or the hope of plunder sent forth under such well-seasoned captains as Williams and Morgan, Vere and the Norrises, Baskerville and Willoughby.

But a Dutch army there was none and Maurice had determined that at last a national force should be created. In this enterprise he was aided and guided by his cousin Lewis William, Stadtholder of Friesland—the quaint, rugged little hero, young in years but almost a veteran in the wars of freedom, who was as genial and intellectual in council as he was reckless and impulsive in the field.

Lewis William had felt that the old military art was dying out and that—there was nothing to take its place. He was a diligent student of antiquity. He had revived in the swamps of Friesland the old manoeuvres, the quickness of wheeling, the strengthening, without breaking ranks or columns, by which the ancient Romans had performed so much excellent work in their day, and which seemed to have passed entirely into oblivion. Old colonels and rittmasters, who had never heard of Leo the Thracian nor the Macedonian phalanx, smiled and shrugged their shoulders, as they listened to the questions of the young count, or gazed with profound astonishment at the eccentric evolutions to which he was accustoming his troops. From the heights of superior wisdom they looked down with pity upon these innovations on the good old battle order. They were accustomed to great solid squares of troops wheeling in one way, steadily, deliberately, all together, by one impulse and as one man. It was true that in narrow fields, and when the enemy was pressing, such stately evolutions often became impossible or ensured defeat; but when the little Stadtholder drilled his soldiers in small bodies of various shapes, teaching them to turn, advance; retreat; wheel in a variety of ways, sometimes in considerable masses, sometimes man by man, sending the foremost suddenly to the rear, or bringing the hindmost ranks to the front, and began to attempt all this in narrow fields as well as in wide ones, and when the enemy was in sight, men stood aghast at his want of reverence, or laughed at him as a pedant. But there came a day when they did not laugh, neither friends nor enemies. Meantime the two cousins, who directed all the military operations in the provinces, understood each other thoroughly and proceeded to perfect their new system, to be adopted at a later period by all civilized nations.



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The regular army of the Netherlands was small in number at that moment— not more than twenty thousand foot with two thousand horse—but it was well disciplined, well equipped, and, what was of great importance, regularly paid. Old campaigners complained that in the halcyon days of paper enrolments, a captain could earn more out of his company than a colonel now received for his whole regiment. The days when a thousand men were paid for, with a couple of hundred in the field, were passing away for the United Provinces and existed only for Italians and Spaniards. While, therefore, mutiny on an organised and extensive scale seemed almost the normal condition of the unpaid legions of Philip, the little army of Maurice was becoming the model for Europe to imitate.

The United Provinces were as yet very far from being masters of their own territory. Many of their most important cities still held for the king. In Brabant, such towns as Breda with its many dependencies and Gertruydenberg; on the Waal, the strong and wealthy Nymegen which Martin Schenk had perished in attempting to surprise; on the Yssel, the thriving city of Zutphen, whose fort had been surrendered by the traitor York, and the stately Deventer, which had been placed in Philip's possession by the treachery of Sir William Stanley; on the borders of Drenthe, the almost impregnable Koevorden, key to the whole Zwollian country; and in the very heart of ancient Netherland, Groningen, capital of the province of the same name, which the treason of Renneberg had sold to the Spanish tyrant; all these flourishing cities and indispensable strongholds were garrisoned by foreign troops, making the idea of Dutch independence a delusion.

While Alexander of Parma, sorely against his will and in obedience to what, he deemed the insane suggestions of his master, was turning his back on the Netherlands in order to relieve Paris, now hard pressed by the Bearnese, an opportunity offered itself of making at least a beginning in the great enterprise of recovering these most valuable possessions.

The fair and pleasant city of Breda lies on the Merk, a slender stream, navigable for small vessels, which finds its way to the sea through the great canal of the Dintel. It had been the property of the Princes of Orange, Barons of Breda, and had passed with the other possessions of the family to the house of Chalons-Nassau. Henry of Nassau had, half a century before, adorned and strengthened it by a splendid palace-fortress which, surrounded by a deep and double moat, thoroughly commanded the town. A garrison of five companies of Italian infantry and one of cavalry lay in this castle, which was under the command of Edward Lanzavecchia, governor both of Breda and of the neighbouring Gertruydenberg.

Breda was an important strategical position. It was moreover the feudal superior of a large number of adjacent villages as well as of the cities Osterhout, Steenberg and Rosendaal. It was obviously not more desirable for Maurice of Nassau to recover his patrimonial city than it was for the States-General to drive the Spaniards from so important a position!

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In the month of February, 1590, Maurice, being then at the castle of Voorn in Zeeland, received a secret visit from a boatman, Adrian van der Berg by name, who lived at the village of Leur, eight or ten miles from Breda, and who had long been in the habit of supplying the castle with turf. In the absence of woods and coal mines, the habitual fuel of the country was furnished by those vast relics of the antediluvian forests which abounded in the still partially submerged soil. The skipper represented that his vessel had passed so often into and out of the castle as to be hardly liable to search by the guard on its entrance. He suggested a stratagem by which it might be possible to surprise the stronghold.

The prince approved of the scheme and immediately consulted with Barneveld. That statesman at once proposed, as a suitable man to carry out the daring venture, Captain Charles de Heraugiere, a nobleman of Cambray, who had been long in the service of the States, had distinguished himself at Sluys and on other occasions, but who had been implicated in Leicester's nefarious plot to gain possession of the city of Leyden a few years before. The Advocate expressed confidence that he would be grateful for so signal an opportunity of retrieving a somewhat damaged reputation. Heraugiere, who was with his company in Voorn at the moment, eagerly signified his desire to attempt the enterprise as soon as the matter was communicated to him; avowing the deepest devotion to the house of William the Silent and perfect willingness to sacrifice his life, if necessary, in its cause and that of the country. Philip Nassau, cousin of Prince Maurice and brother of Lewis William, governor of Gorcum, Dorcum, and Lowenstein Castle and colonel of a regiment of cavalry, was also taken into the secret, as well as Count Hohenlo, President Van der Myle and a few others; but a mystery was carefully spread and maintained over the undertaking.

Heraugiere selected sixty-eight men, on whose personal daring and patience he knew that he could rely, from the regiments of Philip Nassau and of Famars, governor of the neighbouring city of Heusden, and from his own company. Besides himself, the officers to command the party were captains Logier and Fervet, and lieutenant Matthew Held. The names of such devoted soldiers deserve to be commemorated and are still freshly remembered by their countrymen.

On the 25th of February, Maurice and his staff went to Willemstad on the Isle of Klundert, it having been given out on his departure from the Hague that his destination was Dort. On the same night at about eleven o'clock, by the feeble light of a waning moon, Heraugiere and his band came to the Swertsenburg ferry, as agreed upon, to meet the boatman. They found neither him nor his vessel, and they wandered about half the night, very cold, very indignant, much perplexed. At last, on their way back, they came upon the skipper at the village of Terheyde, who



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made the extraordinary excuse that he had overslept himself and that he feared the plot had been discovered. It being too late to make any attempt that night, a meeting was arranged for the following evening. No suspicion of treachery occurred to any of the party, although it became obvious that the skipper had grown faint-hearted. He did not come on the next night to the appointed place but he sent two nephews, boatmen like himself, whom he described as dare-devils.

On Monday night, the 26th of February, the seventy went on board the vessel, which was apparently filled with blocks of turf, and packed themselves closely in the hold. They moved slowly during a little time on their perilous voyage; for the winter wind, thick with fog and sleet, blew directly down the river, bringing along with it huge blocks of ice and scooping the water out of the dangerous shallows, so as to render the vessel at any moment liable to be stranded. At last the navigation became impossible and they came to a standstill. From Monday night till Thursday morning those seventy Hollanders lay packed like herrings in the hold of their little vessel, suffering from hunger, thirst, and deadly cold; yet not one of them attempted to escape or murmured a wish to abandon the enterprise. Even when the third morning dawned there was no better prospect of proceeding; for the remorseless east wind still blew a gale against them, and the shoals which beset their path had become more dangerous than ever. It was, however, absolutely necessary to recruit exhausted nature, unless the adventurers were to drop powerless on the threshold when they should at last arrive at their destination. In all secrecy they went ashore at a lonely castle called Nordam, where they remained to refresh themselves until about eleven at night, when one of the boatmen came to them with the intelligence that the wind had changed and was now blowing freshly in from the sea. Yet the voyage of a few leagues, on which they were embarked, lasted nearly two whole days longer. On Saturday afternoon they passed through the last sluice, and at about three o'clock the last boom was shut behind them. There was no retreat possible for them now. The seventy were to take the strong castle and city of Breda or to lay down their lives, every man of them. No quarter and short shrift—such was their certain destiny, should that half-crippled, half-frozen little band not succeed in their task before another sunrise.

They were now in the outer harbour and not far from the Watergate which led into the inner castle-haven. Presently an officer of the guard put off in a skiff and came on board the vessel. He held a little conversation with the two boatmen, observed that the castle was—much in want of full, took a survey of the turf with which the ship was apparently laden, and then lounged into the little cabin. Here he was only separated by a sliding trap-door from the interior of the vessel. Those inside could hear and see his every movement. Had there been a single cough or sneeze from within, the true character of the cargo, then making its way into the castle, would have been discovered and every man would within ten minutes have been butchered. But the officer,



unsuspecting, soon took his departure, saying that he would send some men to warp the vessel into the castle dock.



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Meantime, as the adventurers were making their way slowly towards the Watergate, they struck upon a hidden obstruction in the river and the deeply laden vessel sprang a leak. In a few minutes those inside were sitting up to their knees in water—a circumstance which scarcely improved their already sufficiently dismal condition. The boatmen vigorously plied the pumps to save the vessel from sinking outright; a party of Italian soldiers soon arrived on the shore, and in the course of a couple of hours they had laboriously dragged the concealed Hollanders into the inner harbour and made their vessel fast, close to the guard-house of the castle.

And now a crowd of all sorts came on board. The winter nights had been long and fearfully cold, and there was almost a dearth of fuel both in town and fortress. A gang of labourers set to work discharging the turf from the vessel with such rapidity that the departing daylight began to shine in upon the prisoners much sooner than they wished. Moreover, the thorough wetting, to which after all their other inconveniences they had just been exposed in their narrow escape from foundering, had set the whole party sneezing and coughing. Never was a catarrh so sudden, so universal, or so ill-timed. Lieutenant Held, unable to control the violence of his cough, drew his dagger and eagerly implored his next neighbour to stab him to the heart, lest his infirmity should lead to the discovery of the whole party. But the calm and wary skipper who stood on the deck instantly commanded his companion to work at the pump with as much clatter as possible, assuring the persons present that the hold was nearly full of water. By this means the noise of the coughing was effectually drowned. Most thoroughly did the bold boatman deserve the title of dare-devil, bestowed by his more fainthearted uncle. Calmly looking death in the face, he stood there quite at his ease, exchanging jokes with his old acquaintances, chaffering with the eager purchasers of peat shouting most noisy and superfluous orders to the one man who composed his crew, doing his utmost, in short, to get rid of his customers and to keep enough of the turf on board to conceal the conspirators.

At last, when the case seemed almost desperate, he loudly declared that sufficient had been unladen for that evening and that it was too dark and he too tired for further work. So, giving a handful of stivers among the workmen, he bade them go ashore at once and have some beer and come next morning for the rest of the cargo. Fortunately, they accepted his hospitable proposition and took their departure. Only the servant of the captain of the guard lingered behind, complaining that the turf was not as good as usual and that his master would never be satisfied with it.

“Ah!” returned the cool skipper, “the best part of the cargo is underneath. This is expressly reserved for the captain. He is sure to get enough of it to-morrow.”

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Thus admonished, the servant departed and the boatman was left to himself. His companion had gone on shore with secret orders to make the best of his way to Prince Maurice, to inform him of the arrival of the ship within the fortress, and of the important fact which they had just learned, that Governor Lanzavecchia, who had heard rumours of some projected enterprise and who suspected that the object aimed at was Gertruydenberg, had suddenly taken his departure for that city, leaving as his lieutenant his nephew Paolo, a raw lad quite incompetent to provide for the safety of Breda.

A little before midnight, Captain Heraugiere made a brief address to his comrades in the vessel, telling them that the hour for carrying out their undertaking had at length arrived. Retreat was impossible, defeat was certain death, only in complete victory lay their own safety and a great advantage for the commonwealth. It was an honor to them to be selected for such an enterprise. To show cowardice now would be an eternal shame for them, and he would be the man to strike dead with his own hand any traitor or poltroon. But if, as he doubted not, every one was prepared to do his duty, their success was assured, and he was himself ready to take the lead in confronting every danger.

He then divided the little band into two companies, one under himself to attack the main guard-house, the other under Fervet to seize the arsenal of the fortress.

Noiselessly they stole out of the ship where they had so long been confined, and stood at last on the ground within the precincts of the castle. Heraugiere marched straight to the guard-house.

“Who goes there?” cried a sentinel, hearing some movement in the darkness.

“A friend,” replied the captain, seizing him, by the throat, and commanding him, if he valued his life, to keep silence except when addressed and then to speak in a whisper.

“How many are there in the garrison?” muttered Heraugiere.

“Three hundred and fifty,” whispered the sentinel.

“How many?” eagerly demanded the nearest followers, not hearing the reply.

“He says there are but fifty of them,” said Heraugiere, prudently suppressing the three hundred, in order to encourage his comrades.

Quietly as they had made their approach, there was nevertheless a stir in the guard-house. The captain of the watch sprang into the courtyard.

“Who goes there?” he demanded in his turn.

“A friend,” again replied Heraugiere, striking him dead with a single blow as he spoke.



Others emerged with torches. Heraugiere was slightly wounded, but succeeded, after a brief struggle, in killing a second assailant. His followers set upon the watch who retreated into the guard-house. Heraugiere commanded his men to fire through the doors and windows, and in a few minutes every one of the enemy lay dead.

It was not a moment for making prisoners or speaking of quarter. Meantime Fervet and his band had not been idle. The magazine-house of the castle was seized, its defenders slain. Young Lanzavecchia made a sally from the palace, was wounded and driven back together with a few of his adherents.



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The rest of the garrison fled helter-skelter into the town. Never had the musketeers of Italy—for they all belonged to Spinola's famous Sicilian Legion—behaved so badly. They did not even take the precaution to destroy the bridge between the castle and the town as they fled panic-stricken before seventy Hollanders. Instead of encouraging the burghers to their support they spread dismay, as they ran, through every street.

Young Lanzavecchia, penned into a corner of the castle; began to parley; hoping for a rally before a surrender should be necessary. In the midst of the negotiation and a couple of hours before dawn, Hohenlo; duly apprised by the boatman, arrived with the vanguard of Maurice's troops before the field-gate of the fort. A vain attempt was made to force this portal open, but the winter's ice had fixed it fast. Hohenlo was obliged to batter down the palisade near the water-gate and enter by the same road through which the fatal turf-boat had passed.

Soon after he had marched into the town at the head of a strong detachment, Prince Maurice himself arrived in great haste, attended by Philip Nassau, the Admiral Justinus Nassau, Count Solms, Peter van der Does, and Sir Francis Vere, and followed by another body of picked troops; the musicians playing merrily that national air, then as now so dear to Netherlanders—

“Wilhelmus van Nassouwen  
Ben ick van Duytaem bloed.”

The fight was over. Some forty of the garrison had been killed, but not a man of the attacking party. The burgomaster sent a trumpet to the prince asking permission to come to the castle to arrange a capitulation; and before sunrise, the city and fortress of Breda had surrendered to the authority of the States-General and of his Excellency.

The terms were moderate. The plundering was commuted for the payment of two months' wages to every soldier engaged in the affair. Burghers who might prefer to leave the city were allowed to do so with protection to life, and property. Those who were willing to remain loyal citizens were not to be molested, in their consciences or their households, in regard to religion. The public exercise of Catholic rites was however suspended until the States-General should make some universal provision on this subject.

Subsequently, it must be allowed, the bargain of commutation proved a bad one for the burghers. Seventy men had in reality done the whole work, but so many soldiers, belonging to the detachments who marched in after the fortress had been taken, came forward to claim their months' wages as to bring the whole amount required above one hundred thousand florins. The Spaniards accordingly reproached Prince Maurice with having fined his own patrimonial city more heavily than Alexander Farnese had mulcted Antwerp, which had been made to pay but four hundred thousand florins, a far less sum in proportion to the wealth and importance of the place.



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Already the Prince of Parma, in the taking of Breda, saw verified his predictions of the disasters about to fall on the Spanish interests in the Netherlands, by reason of Philip's obstinate determination to concentrate all his energies on the invasion of France. Alexander had been unable, in the midst of preparations for his French campaign, to arrest this sudden capture, but his Italian blood was on fire at the ignominy which had come upon the soldiership of his countrymen. Five companies of foot and one of horse-picked troops of Spain and Italy—had surrendered a wealthy, populous town and a well-fortified castle to a mud-scow, and had fled shrieking in dismay from the onset of seventy frost-bitten Hollanders.

It was too late to save the town, but he could punish, as it deserved, the pusillanimity of the garrison.

Three captains—one of them rejoicing in the martial name of Cesar Guerra—were publicly beheaded in Brussels. A fourth, Ventimiglia, was degraded but allowed to escape with life, on account of his near relationship to the Duke of Terranova, while Governor Lanzavecchia was obliged to resign the command of Gertruydenberg. The great commander knew better than to encourage the yielding up of cities and fortresses by a mistaken lenity to their unlucky defenders.

Prince Maurice sent off letters the same night announcing his success to the States-General. Hohenlo wrote pithily to Olden-Barneveld—"The castle and town of Breda are ours, without a single man dead on our side. The garrison made no resistance but ran distracted out of the town."

The church bells rang and bonfires blazed and cannon thundered in every city in the United Provinces to commemorate this auspicious event. Olden-Barneveld, too, whose part in arranging the scheme was known to have been so valuable, received from the States-General a magnificent gilded vase with sculptured representations of the various scenes in the drama, and it is probable that not more unmingled satisfaction had been caused by any one event of the war than by this surprise of Breda.

The capture of a single town, not of first-rate importance either, would hardly seem too merit so minute a description as has been given in the preceding pages. But the event, with all its details, has been preserved with singular vividness in Netherland story. As an example of daring, patience, and complete success, it has served to encourage the bold spirits of every generation and will always inspire emulation in patriotic hearts of every age and clime, while, as the first of a series of audacious enterprises by which Dutch victories were to take the place of a long procession of Spanish triumphs on the blood-stained soil of the provinces, it merits, from its chronological position, a more than ordinary attention.

In the course of the summer Prince Maurice, carrying out into practice the lessons which he had so steadily been pondering, reduced the towns and strong places of Heyl,

Flemert, Elshout, Crevecoeur, Hayden, Steenberg, Rosendaal, and Osterhout. But his time, during the remainder of the year 1590, was occupied with preparations for a campaign on an extended scale and with certain foreign negotiations to which it will soon be necessary to direct the reader's attention.



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## CHAPTER XXII.

Struggle of the United Provinces against Philip of Spain—Progress of the Republic—Influence of Geographical position on the fate of the Netherlands—Contrast offered by America—Miserable state of the so-called “obedient” provinces—Prosperity of the Commonwealth—Its internal government—Tendency to provincialism—Quibbles of the English Members of the Council, Wilkes and Bodley—Exclusion of Olden-Barneveld from the State Council—Proposals of Philip for mediation with the United Provinces—The Provinces resolutely decline all proffers of intervention.

The United Provinces had now been engaged in unbroken civil war for a quarter of a century. It is, however, inaccurate to designate this great struggle with tyranny as a civil war. It was a war for independence, maintained by almost the whole population of the United Provinces against a foreigner, a despot, alien to their blood, ignorant of their language, a hater of their race, a scorner of their religion, a trampler upon their liberties, their laws, and institutions—a man who had publicly declared that he would rather the whole nation were exterminated than permitted to escape from subjection to the Church of Rome. Liberty of speech, liberty of the press, liberty of thought on political, religious, and social questions existed within those Dutch pastures and Frisian swamps to a far greater degree than in any other part of the world at that day; than in very many regions of Christendom in our own time. Personal slavery was unknown. In a large portion of their territory it had never existed. The free Frisians, nearest blood-relations of, in this respect, the less favoured Anglo-Saxons, had never bowed the knee to the feudal system, nor worn nor caused to be worn the collar of the serf. In the battles for human liberty no nation has stood with cleaner hands before the great tribunal, nor offered more spotless examples of patriotism to be emulated in all succeeding ages, than the Netherlanders in their gigantic struggle with Philip of Spain. It was not a class struggling for their own privileges, but trampling on their fellow-men in a lower scale of humanity. Kings and aristocrats sneered at the vulgar republic where Hans Miller, Hans Baker, and Hans Brewer enjoyed political rights and prated of a sovereignty other than that of long-descended races and of anointed heads. Yet the pikemen of Spain and the splendid cavalry and musketeers of Italy and Burgundy, who were now beginning to show their backs both behind entrenchments and in the open field to their republican foes, could not deny the valour with which the battles of liberty were fought; while Elizabeth of England, maintainer, if such ever were, of hereditary sovereignty and hater of popular freedom, acknowledged that for wisdom in council, dignity and adroitness in diplomatic debate, there were none to surpass the plain burgher statesmen of the new republic.

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And at least these Netherlanders were consistent with themselves. They had come to disbelieve in the mystery of kingcraft, in the divine speciality of a few transitory mortals to direct the world's events and to dictate laws to their fellow-creatures. What they achieved was for the common good of all. They chose to live in an atmosphere of blood and fire for generation after generation rather than flinch from their struggle with despotism, for they knew that, cruel as the sea, it would swallow them all at last in one common destruction if they faltered or paused. They fought for the liberty of all. And it is for this reason that the history of this great conflict deserved to be deeply pondered by those who have the instinct of human freedom. Had the Hollanders basely sunk before the power of Spain, the proud history of England, France, and Germany would have been written in far different terms. The blood and tears which the Netherlanders caused to flow in their own stormy days have turned to blessings for remotest climes and ages. A pusillanimous peace, always possible at any period of their war, would have been hailed with rapture by contemporary statesmen, whose names have vanished from the world's memory; but would have sown with curses and misery the soil of Europe for succeeding ages. The territory of the Netherlands is narrow and meagre. It is but a slender kingdom now among the powers of the earth. The political grandeur of nations is determined by physical causes almost as much as by moral ones. Had the cataclysm which separated the fortunate British islands from the mainland happened to occur, instead, at a neighbouring point of the earth's crust; had the Belgian, Dutch, German and Danish Netherland floated off as one island into the sea, while that famous channel between two great rival nations remained dry land, there would have been a different history of the world.

But in the 16th century the history of one country was not an isolated chapter of personages and events. The history of the Netherlands is history of liberty. It was now combined with the English, now with French, with German struggles for political and religious freedom, but it is impossible to separate it from the one great complex which makes up the last half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries.

At that day the Netherland republic was already becoming a power of importance in the political family of Christendom. If, in spite of her geographical disadvantages, she achieved so much, how much vaster might her power have grown, how much stronger through her example might popular institutions throughout the world have become, and how much more pacific the relations of European tribes, had nature been less niggard in her gifts to the young commonwealth. On the sea she was strong, for the ocean is the best of frontiers; but on land her natural boundaries faded vaguely away, without strong physical demarcations and with no sharply

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defined limits of tongue, history or race. Accident or human caprice seemed to have divided German Highland from German Netherland; Belgic Gaul from the rest of the Gallic realm. And even from the slender body, which an arbitrary destiny had set off for centuries into a separate organism, tyranny and religious bigotry had just hewn another portion away. But the commonwealth was already too highly vitalized to permit peaceful dismemberment. Only the low organisms can live in all their parts after violent separations. The trunk remained, bleeding but alive and vigorous, while the amputated portion lay for centuries in fossilized impotence.

Never more plainly than in the history of this commonwealth was the geographical law manifested by which the fate of nations is so deeply influenced. Courage, enterprise amounting almost to audacity, and a determined will confronted for a long lapse of time the inexorable, and permitted a great empire to germinate out of a few sand-banks held in defiance of the ocean, and protected from human encroachments on the interior only by the artificial barrier of custom-house and fort.

Thus foredoomed at birth, it must increase our admiration of human energy and of the sustaining influence of municipal liberty that the republic, even if transitory, should yet have girdled the earth with its possessions and held for a considerable period so vast a portion of the world in fee.

What a lesson to our transatlantic commonwealth, whom bountiful nature had blessed at her birth beyond all the nations of history and seemed to speed upon an unlimited career of freedom and peaceful prosperity, should she be capable at the first alarm on her track to throw away her inestimable advantages! If all history is not a mockery and a fable, she may be sure that the nation which deliberately carves itself in pieces and, substitutes artificial boundaries for the natural and historic ones, condemns itself either to extinction or to the lower life of political insignificance and petty warfare, with the certain loss of liberty and national independence at last. Better a terrible struggle, better the sacrifice of prosperity and happiness for years, than the eternal setting of that great popular hope, the United American Republic.

I speak in this digression only of the relations of physical nature to liberty and nationality, making no allusion to the equally stringent moral laws which no people can violate and yet remain in health and vigour.

Despite a quarter of a century of what is commonly termed civil war, the United Netherlands were prosperous and full of life. It was in the provinces which had seceded from the union of Utrecht that there was silence as of the grave, destitution, slavery, abject submission to a foreign foe. The leaders in the movement which had brought about the scission of 1579—commonly called the 'Reconciliation'—enjoyed military and civil posts under a foreign tyrant, but

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were poorly rewarded for subserviency in fighting against their own brethren by contumely on the part of their masters. As for the mass of the people it would be difficult to find a desolation more complete than that recorded of the “obedient” provinces. Even as six years before, wolves littered their whelps in deserted farmhouses, cane-brake and thicket usurped the place of cornfield and, orchard, robbers swarmed on the highways once thronged by a most thriving population, nobles begged their bread in the streets of cities whose merchants once entertained emperors and whose wealth and traffic were the wonder of the world, while the Spanish viceroy formally permitted the land in the agricultural districts to be occupied and farmed by the first comer for his own benefit, until the vanished proprietors of the soil should make their re-appearance.

“Administered without justice or policy,” said a Netherlander who was intensely loyal to the king and a most uncompromising Catholic, “eaten up and abandoned for that purpose to the arbitrary will of foreigners who suck the substance and marrow of the land without benefit to the king, gnaw the obedient cities to the bones, and plunder the open defenceless country at their pleasure, it may be imagined how much satisfaction these provinces take in their condition. Commerce and trade have ceased in a country which traffic alone has peopled, for without it no human habitation could be more miserable and poor than our land.”—[Discours du Seigneur de Champagny sur les affaires des Pays Bas, 21 Dec. 1589. Bibl. de Bourgogne, Ms. No. 12,962.]

Nothing could be more gloomy than the evils thus described by the Netherland statesman and soldier, except the remedy which he suggested. The obedient provinces, thus scourged and blasted for their obedience, were not advised to improve their condition by joining hands with their sister States, who had just constituted themselves by their noble resistance to royal and ecclesiastical tyranny into a free and powerful commonwealth. On the contrary, two great sources of regeneration and prosperity were indicated, but very different ones from those in which the republic had sought and found her strength. In the first place, it was suggested as indispensable that the obedient provinces should have more Jesuits and more Friars. The mendicant orders should be summoned to renewed exertions, and the king should be requested to send seminary priests to every village in numbers proportionate to the population, who should go about from house to house, counting the children, and seeing that they learned their catechism if their parents did not teach them, and, even in case they did, examining whether it was done thoroughly and without deception.



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In the second place it was laid down as important that the bishops should confirm no one who had not been sufficiently catechized. “And if the mendicant orders,” said Champagny, “are not numerous enough for these catechizations, the Jesuits might charge themselves therewith, not more and not less than the said mendicants, some of each being deputed to each parish. To this end it would be well if his Majesty should obtain from the Pope a command to the Jesuits to this effect, since otherwise they might not be willing to comply. It should also be ordered that all Jesuits, natives of these provinces, should return hither, instead of wandering about in other regions as if their help were not so necessary here.”—[Ibid.]

It was also recommended that the mendicant friars should turn their particular attention to Antwerp, and that one of them should preach in French, another in German, another in English, every day at the opening of the Exchange.

With these appliances it was thought that Antwerp would revive out of its ruins and, despite the blockade of its river, renew its ancient commercial glories. Founded on the substantial rocks of mendicancy and jesuitism, it might again triumph over its rapidly rising rival, the heretic Amsterdam, which had no better basis for its grandeur than religious and political liberty, and uncontrolled access to the ocean.

Such were the aspirations of a distinguished and loyal Netherlander for the regeneration of his country. Such were his opinions as to the true sources of the wealth and greatness of nations. Can we wonder that the country fell to decay, or that this experienced, statesman and brave soldier should himself, after not many years, seek to hide his dishonoured head under the cowl of a monk?

The coast of the obedient provinces was thoroughly blockaded. The United Provinces commanded the sea, their cruisers, large and small, keeping diligent watch off every port and estuary of the Flemish coast, so that not a herringboat could enter without their permission. Antwerp, when it fell into the hands of the Spaniard, sank for ever from its proud position. The city which Venetians but lately had confessed with a sigh to be superior in commercial grandeur to their own magnificent capital, had ceased to be a seaport. Shut in from the ocean by Flushing—firmly held by an English garrison as one of the cautionary towns for the Queen’s loan—her world-wide commerce withered before men’s eyes. Her population was dwindling to not much more than half its former numbers, while Ghent, Bruges, and other cities were diminished by two-thirds.



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On the other hand, the commerce and manufactures of the United Republic had enormously augmented. Its bitterest enemies bore witness to the sagacity and success by which its political affairs were administered, and to its vast superiority in this respect over the obedient provinces. "The rebels are not ignorant of our condition," said Champagny, "they are themselves governed with consummate wisdom, and they mock at those who submit themselves to the Duke of Parma. They are the more confirmed in their rebellion, when they see how many are thronging from us to them, complaining of such bad government, and that all take refuge in flight who can from the misery and famine which it has caused throughout these provinces!" The industrial population had flowed from the southern provinces into the north, in obedience to an irresistible law. The workers in iron, paper, silk, linen, lace, the makers of brocade, tapestry, and satin, as well as of all the coarser fabrics, had fled from the land of oppression to the land of liberty. Never in the history of civilisation had there been a more rapid development of human industry than in Holland during these years of bloodiest warfare. The towns were filled to overflowing. Amsterdam multiplied in wealth and population as fast as Antwerp shrank. Almost as much might be said of Middelburg, Enkhuyzen, Horn, and many other cities. It is the epoch to which the greatest expansion of municipal architecture is traced. Warehouses, palaces, docks, arsenals, fortifications, dykes, splendid streets and suburbs, were constructed on every side, and still there was not room for the constantly increasing population, large numbers of which habitually dwelt in the shipping. For even of that narrow span of earth called the province of Holland, one-third was then interior water, divided into five considerable lakes, those of Harlem, Schermer, Beemster, Waert, and Purmer. The sea was kept out by a magnificent system of dykes under the daily superintendence of a board of officers, called dyke-graves, while the rain-water, which might otherwise have drowned the soil thus painfully reclaimed, was pumped up by windmills and drained off through sluices opening and closing with the movement of the tides.

The province of Zeeland was one vast "polder." It was encircled by an outer dyke of forty Dutch equal to one hundred and fifty English, miles in extent, and traversed by many interior barriers. The average cost of dyke-building was sixty florins the rod of twelve feet, or 84,000 florins the Dutch mile. The total cost of the Zeeland dykes was estimated at 3,360,000 florins, besides the annual repairs.

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But it was on the sea that the Netherlanders were really at home, and they always felt it in their power—as their last resource against foreign tyranny—to bury their land for ever in the ocean, and to seek a new country at the ends of the earth. It has always been difficult to doom to political or personal slavery a nation accustomed to maritime pursuits. Familiarity with the boundless expanse of ocean, and the habit of victoriously contending with the elements in their stormy strength, would seem to inspire a consciousness in mankind of human dignity and worth. With the exception of Spain, the chief seafaring nations of the world were already protestant. The counter-league, which was to do battle so strenuously with the Holy Confederacy, was essentially a maritime league. “All the maritime heretics of the world, since heresy is best suited to navigators, will be banded together,” said Champagny, “and then woe to the Spanish Indies, which England and Holland are already threatening.”

The Netherlanders had been noted from earliest times for a free-spoken and independent personal demeanour. At this epoch they were taking the lead of the whole world in marine adventure. At least three thousand vessels of between one hundred and four hundred tons, besides innumerable doggers, busses, cromstevens, and similar craft used on the rivers and in fisheries, were to be found in the United Provinces, and one thousand, it was estimated, were annually built.

They traded to the Baltic regions for honey, wax, tallow, lumber, iron, turpentine, hemp. They brought from farthest Indies and from America all the fabrics of ancient civilisation, all the newly discovered products of a virgin soil, and dispensed them among the less industrious nations of the earth. Enterprise, led on and accompanied by science, was already planning the boldest flights into the unknown yet made by mankind, and it will soon be necessary to direct attention to those famous arctic voyages, made by Hollanders in pursuit of the north-west passage to Cathay, in which as much heroism, audacity, and scientific intelligence were displayed as in later times have made so many men belonging to both branches of the Anglo-Saxon race illustrious. A people, engaged in perennial conflict with a martial and sacerdotal despotism the most powerful in the world, could yet spare enough from its superfluous energies to confront the dangers of the polar oceans, and to bring back treasures of science to enrich the world.

Such was the spirit of freedom. Inspired by its blessed influence this vigorous and inventive little commonwealth triumphed over all human, all physical obstacles in its path. It organised armies on new principles to drive the most famous legions of history from its soil. It built navies to help rescue, at critical moments, the cause of England, of Protestantism, of civil liberty, and even of French nationality. More than all, by its trade with its arch-enemy, the republic constantly multiplied its resources for destroying his power and aggrandizing its own.



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The war navy of the United Provinces was a regular force of one hundred ships—large at a period when a vessel of thirteen hundred tons was a monster—together with an indefinite number of smaller craft, which could be put into the public service on short notice? In those days of close quarters and light artillery a merchant ship was converted into a cruiser by a very simple process. The navy was a self-supporting one, for it was paid by the produce of convoy fees and licenses to trade. It must be confessed that a portion of these revenues savoured much of black-mail to be levied on friend and foe; for the distinctions between, freebooter, privateer, pirate, and legitimate sea-robber were not very closely drawn in those early days of seafaring.

Prince Maurice of Nassau was lord high admiral, but he was obliged to listen to the counsels of various provincial boards of admiralty, which often impeded his action and interfered with his schemes.

It cannot be denied that the inherent vice of the Netherland polity was already a tendency to decentralisation and provincialism. The civil institutions of the country, in their main characteristics, have been frequently sketched in these pages. At this period they had entered almost completely into the forms which were destined to endure until the commonwealth fell in the great crash of the French Revolution. Their beneficial effects were more visible now—sustained and bound together as the nation was by the sense of a common danger, and by the consciousness of its daily developing strength—than at a later day when prosperity and luxury had blunted the fine instincts of patriotism.

The supreme power, after the deposition of Philip, and the refusal by France and by England to accept the sovereignty of the provinces, was definitely lodged in the States-General. But the States-General did not technically represent the people. Its members were not elected by the people. It was a body composed of delegates from each provincial assembly, of which there were now five: Holland, Zeeland, Friesland, Utrecht, and Gelderland. Each provincial assembly consisted again of delegates, not from the inhabitants of the provinces, but from the magistracies of the cities. Those, magistracies, again, were not elected by the citizens. They elected themselves by renewing their own vacancies, and were, in short, immortal corporations. Thus, in final analysis, the supreme power was distributed and localised among the mayors and aldermen of a large number of cities, all independent alike of the people below and of any central power above.

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It is true that the nobles, as, a class, had a voice in the provincial and, in the general assembly, both for themselves and as technical representatives of the smaller towns and of the rural population. But, as a matter of fact, the influence of this caste had of late years very rapidly diminished, through its decrease in numbers, and the far more rapid increase in wealth and power of the commercial and manufacturing classes. Individual nobles were constantly employed in the military, civil, and diplomatic service of the republic, but their body had ceased to be a power. It had been the policy of William the Silent to increase the number of cities entitled to send deputies to the States; for it was among the cities that his resistance to the tyranny of Spain, and his efforts to obtain complete independence for his country, had been mainly supported. Many of the great nobles, as has been seen in these pages, denounced the liberator and took sides with the tyrant. Lamoral Egmont had walked to the scaffold to which Philip had condemned him, chanting a prayer for Philip's welfare. Egmont's eldest son was now foremost in the Spanish army, doing battle against his own country in behalf of the tyrant who had taken his father's life. Aremberg and Ligny, Arachot, Chimay, Croy, Caprea, Montigny, and most of the great patrician families of the Netherlands fought on the royal side.

The revolution which had saved the country from perdition and created the great Netherland republic was a burgher revolution, and burgher statesmen now controlled the State. The burgher class of Europe is not the one that has been foremost in the revolutionary movements of history, or that has distinguished itself—especially in more modern times—by a passionate love of liberty. It is always easy to sneer at Hans Miller and Hans Baker, and at the country where such plebeians are powerful. Yet the burghers played a prominent part in the great drama which forms my theme, and there has rarely been seen a more solid or powerful type of their class than the burgher statesman, John of Olden-Barneveld, who, since the death of William the Silent and the departure of Lord Leicester, had mainly guided the destinies of Holland. Certainly no soldier nor statesman who ever measured intellects with that potent personage was apt to treat his genius otherwise than with profound respect.

But it is difficult to form a logical theory of government except on the fiction of divine right as a basis, unless the fact of popular sovereignty, as expressed by a majority, be frankly accepted in spite of philosophical objections.



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In the Netherlands there was no king, and strictly speaking no people. But this latter and fatal defect was not visible in the period of danger and of contest. The native magistrates of that age were singularly pure, upright, and patriotic. Of this there is no question whatever. And the people acquiesced cheerfully in their authority, not claiming a larger representation than such as they virtually possessed in the multiple power exercised over them, by men moving daily among them, often of modest fortunes and of simple lives. Two generations later, and in the wilderness of Massachusetts, the early American colonists voluntarily placed in the hands of their magistrates, few in number, unlimited control of all the functions of government, and there was hardly an instance known of an impure exercise of authority. Yet out of that simple kernel grew the least limited and most powerful democracy ever known.

In the later days of Netherland history a different result became visible, and with it came the ruin of the State. The governing class, of burgher origin, gradually separated itself from the rest of the citizens, withdrew from commercial pursuits, lived on hereditary fortunes in the exercise of functions which were likewise virtually hereditary, and so became an oligarchy. This result, together with the physical causes already indicated, made the downfall of the commonwealth probable whenever it should be attacked by an overwhelming force from without.

The States-General, however, at this epoch—although they had in a manner usurped the sovereignty, which in the absence of a feudal lord really belonged to the whole people, and had silently repossessed themselves of those executive functions which they had themselves conferred upon the state council—were at any rate without self-seeking ambition. The Hollanders, as a race, were not office seekers, but were singularly docile to constituted authority, while their regents—as the municipal magistrates were commonly called—were not very far removed above the mass by birth or habitual occupation. The republic was a social and political fact, against which there was no violent antagonism either of laws or manners, and the people, although not technically existing, in reality was all in all. In Netherland story the People is ever the true hero. It was an almost unnoticed but significant revolution—that by which the state council was now virtually deprived of its authority. During Leicester's rule it had been a most important college of administration. Since his resignation it had been entrusted by the States-General with high executive functions, especially in war matters. It was an assembly of learned counsellors appointed from the various provinces for wisdom and experience, usually about eighteen in number, and sworn in all things to be faithful to the whole republic. The allegiance of all was rendered to the nation. Each individual member was required to "forswear his native province in order to be true to the generality." They deliberated in common for the general good, and were not hampered by instructions from the provincial diets, nor compelled to refer to those diets for decision when important questions were at issue. It was an independent executive committee for the whole republic.

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But Leicester had made it unpopular. His intrigues, in the name of democracy, to obtain possession of sovereign power, to inflame the lower classes against the municipal magistracies, and to excite the clergy to claim a political influence to which they were not entitled and which was most mischievous in its effects, had exposed the state council, with which he had been in the habit of consulting, to suspicion.

The Queen of England, by virtue of her treaty had the right to appoint two of her subjects to be members of the council. The governor of her auxiliary forces was also entitled to a seat there. Since the malpractices of Leicester and the danger to which the country had been, subjected in consequence had been discovered, it was impossible that there should be very kindly feeling toward England in the public mind, however necessary a sincere alliance between the two countries was known to be for the welfare of both.

The bickering of the two English councillors, Wilkes and Bodley, and of the governor of the English contingent with the Hollanders, was incessant. The Englishmen went so far as to claim the right of veto upon all measures passed by the council, but the States-General indignantly replied that the matters deliberated and decided upon by that board were their own affairs, not the state affairs of England. The two members and the military officer who together represented her Majesty were entitled to participate in the deliberations and to vote with their brother members. For them to claim the right, however, at will to annul the proceedings was an intolerable assumption, and could not be listened to for a moment. Certainly it would have been strange had two Dutchmen undertaken to veto every measure passed by the Queen's council at Richmond or Windsor, and it was difficult to say on what article of the contract this extraordinary privilege was claimed by Englishmen at the Hague.

Another cause of quarrel was the inability of the Englishmen to understand the language in which the debates of the state council were held.

According to a custom not entirely unexampled in parliamentary history the members of assembly and council made use of their native tongue in discussing the state affairs of their native land. It was however considered a grievance by the two English members that the Dutchmen should speak Dutch, and it was demanded in the Queen's name that they should employ some other language which a foreigner could more easily understand.

The Hollanders however refused this request, not believing that in a reversed case her Majesty's Council or Houses of Parliament would be likely or competent to carry on their discussions habitually in Italian or Latin for the benefit of a couple of strangers who might not be familiar with English. The more natural remedy would have been for the foreigners to take lessons in the tongue of the country, or to seek for an interpreter among their colleagues; especially as the States, when all the Netherlands were but

provinces, had steadily refused to adopt any language but their mother tongue, even at the demand of their sovereign prince.

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At this moment, Sir Thomas Bodley was mainly entrusted with her Majesty's affairs at the Hague, but his overbearing demeanour, intemperate language, and passionate style of correspondence with the States and with the royal government, did much injury to both countries. The illustrious Walsingham—whose death in the spring of this year England had so much reason to deplore—had bitterly lamented, just before his death, having recommended so unquiet a spirit for so important a place. Ortel, envoy of the States to London, expressed his hopes that affairs would now be handled more to the satisfaction of the States; as Bodley would be obliged, since the death of Sir Francis, to address his letters to the Lord High Treasurer, with whom it would be impossible for him to obtain so much influence as he had enjoyed with the late Secretary of State.

Moreover it was exactly at this season that the Advocate of Holland, Olden-Barneveld, was excluded from the state council. Already the important province of Holland was dissatisfied with its influence in that body. Bearing one-half of the whole burthen of the war it was not content with one-quarter of the council vote, and very soon it became the custom for the States-General to conduct all the most important affairs of the republic. The state council complained that even in war matters it was not consulted, and that most important enterprises were undertaken by Prince Maurice without its knowledge, and on advice of the Advocate alone. Doubtless this was true, and thus, most unfortunately, the commonwealth was degraded to a confederacy instead of becoming an incorporate federal State. The members of the States-General—as it has been seen were responsible only to their constituents, the separate provinces. They avowed allegiance, each to his own province, none to the central government. Moreover they were not representatives, but envoys, appointed by petty provinces, bound by written orders, and obliged to consult at every step with their sovereigns at home. The Netherland polity was thus stamped almost at its birth with a narrow provincialism: Delay and hesitation thus necessarily engendered were overcome in the days of danger by patriotic fervour. The instinct of union for the sake of the national existence was sufficiently strong, and the robust, practical common sense of the people sufficiently enlightened to prevent this weakness from degenerating into impotence so long as the war pressure remained to mould them into a whole. But a day was to come for bitterly rueing this paralysis of the imperial instincts of the people, this indefinite decentralisation of the national strength.

For the present, the legislative and executive body was the States-General. But the States-General were in reality the States provincial, and the States provincial were the city municipalities, among which the magistracies of Holland were preponderant.

Ere long it became impossible for an individual to resist the decrees of the civic authorities. In 1591, the States-General passed a resolution by which these arrogant corporations virtually procured their exemption from any process at the suit of a private person to be placed on record. So far could the principle of sovereignty be pulverized. City council boards had become supreme.

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It was naturally impossible during the long continuance of this great struggle, that neutral nations should not be injuriously affected by it in a variety of ways. And as a matter of course neutral nations were disposed to counsel peace. Peace, peace; peace was the sigh of the bystanders whose commerce was impeded, whose international relations were complicated, and whose own security was endangered in the course of the bloody conflict. It was however not very much the fashion of that day for governments to obtrude advice upon each other; or to read to each other moral lectures. It was assumed that when the expense and sacrifice of war had been incurred, it was for cause, and the discovery had not yet been made that those not immediately interested in the fray were better acquainted with its merits than, the combatants themselves, and were moreover endued with, superhuman wisdom to see with perfect clearness that future issue which to the parties themselves was concealed.

Cheap apothegms upon the blessings of peace and upon the expediency of curbing the angry passions, uttered by the belligerents of yesterday to the belligerents of to-day, did not then pass current for profound wisdom.

Still the emperor Rudolph, abstaining for a time from his star-gazing, had again thought proper to make a feeble attempt at intervention in those sublunary matters which were supposed to be within his sphere.

It was perfectly well known that Philip was incapable of abating one jot of his pretensions, and that to propose mediation to the United Provinces was simply to request them, for the convenience of other powers, to return to the slavery out of which, by the persistent efforts of a quarter of a century, they had struggled. Nevertheless it was formally proposed to re-open those lukewarm fountains of diplomatic commonplace in which healing had been sought during the peace negotiations of Cologne in the year 1579. But the States-General resolutely kept them sealed. They simply answered his imperial Majesty by a communication of certain intercepted correspondence between—the King of Spain and his ambassador at Vienna, San Clemente, through which it was satisfactorily established that any negotiation would prove as gigantic a comedy on the part of Spain as had been the memorable conferences at Ostend, by which the invasion of England had been masked.

There never was a possibility of mediation or of compromise except by complete submission on the part of the Netherlanders to Crown and Church. Both in this, as well as in previous and subsequent attempts at negotiations, the secret instructions of Philip forbade any real concessions on his side. He was always ready to negotiate, he was especially anxious to obtain a suspension of arms from the rebels during negotiation; but his agents were instructed to use great dexterity and dissimulation in order that the proposal for such armistice, as well as for negotiation at all, should

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appear to proceed, not from himself as was the fact, but from the emperor as a neutral potentate. The king uniformly proposed three points; firstly, that the rebels should reconvert themselves to the Catholic religion; secondly, that they should return to their obedience to himself; thirdly, that they should pay the expenses of the war. Number three was, however, usually inserted in order that, by conceding it subsequently, after much contestation, he might appear conciliatory. It was a vehicle of magnanimity towards men grown insolent with temporary success. Numbers one and two were immutable.

Especially upon number one was concession impossible. “The Catholic religion is the first thing,” said Philip, “and although the rebels do not cease to insist that liberty of conscience should be granted them, in order that they may preserve that which they have had during these past years, this is never to be thought of in any event.” The king always made free use of the terrible weapon which the Protestant princes of Germany had placed in his hands. For indeed if it were right that one man, because possessed of hereditary power over millions of his fellow creatures, should compel them all to accept the dogmas of Luther or of Calvin because agreeable to himself, it was difficult to say why another man, in a similarly elevated position, might not compel his subjects to accept the creed of Trent, or the doctrines of Mahomet or Confucius. The Netherlanders were fighting—even more than they knew—for liberty of conscience, for equality of all religions; not for Moses, nor for Melancthon; for Henry, Philip, or Pius; while Philip justly urged that no prince in Christendom permitted license. “Let them well understand,” said his Majesty, “that since others who live in error, hold the opinion that vassals are to conform to the religion of their master, it is insufferable that it should be proposed to me that my vassals should have a different religion from mine—and that too being the true religion, proved by so many testimonies and miracles, while all others are deception. This must be arranged with the authority of the commissioners of the emperor, since it is well understood by them that the vassal is never to differ from the opinion of his master.” Certainly it was worth an eighty years’ war to drive such blasphemous madness as this out of human heads, whether crowned or shaven.

There was likewise a diet held during the summer of this year, of the circles of the empire nearest to the Netherlands—Westphalia, Cleves, Juliers, and Saxony—from which commissioners were deputed both to Brussels and to the Hague, to complain of the misfortunes suffered by neutral and neighbouring nations in consequence of the civil war.

They took nothing by their mission to the Duke of Parma. At the Hague the deputies were heard on the 22nd August, 1590. They complained to the States-General of “brandschatting” on the border, of the holding of forts beyond the lines, and of other invasions of neutral territory, of the cruising of the war-vessels of the States off the

shores and on the rivers, and of their interference with lawful traders. Threats were made of forcible intervention and reprisals.



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The united States replied on the 13th September. Expressing deep regret that neutral nations should suffer, they pronounced it to be impossible but that some sparks from the great fire, now desolating their land, should fly over into their neighbours' ground. The States were fighting the battle of liberty against slavery, in which the future generations of Germany, as well as of the Netherlands were interested. They were combating that horrible institution, the Holy Inquisition. They were doing their best to strike down the universal monarchy of Spain, which they described as a bloodthirsty, insatiable, insolent, absolute dominion of Saracenic, Moorish Christians. They warred with a system which placed inquisitors on the seats of judges, which made it unlawful to read the Scriptures, which violated all oaths, suppressed all civic freedom, trampled, on all laws and customs, raised inordinate taxes by arbitrary decree, and subjected high and low to indiscriminate murder. Spain had sworn the destruction of the provinces and their subjugation to her absolute dominion, in order to carry out her scheme of universal empire.

These were the deeds and designs against which the States were waging that war, concerning some inconvenient results of which their neighbours, now happily neutral, were complaining. But the cause of the States was the cause of humanity itself. This Saracenic, Moorish, universal monarchy had been seen by Germany to murder, despoil, and trample upon the Netherlands. It had murdered millions of innocent Indians and Granadians. It had kept Naples and Milan in abject slavery. It had seized Portugal. It had deliberately planned and attempted an accursed invasion of England and Ireland. It had overrun and plundered many cities of the empire. It had spread a web of secret intrigue about Scotland. At last it was sending great armies to conquer France and snatch its crown. Poor France now saw the plans of this Spanish tyranny and bewailed her misery. The subjects of her lawful king were ordered to rise against him, on account of religion and conscience. Such holy pretexts were used by these Saracenic Christians in order to gain possession of that kingdom.

For all these reasons, men should not reproach the inhabitants of the Netherlands, because seeing the aims of this accursed tyranny, they had set themselves to resist it. It was contrary to reason to consider them as disturbers of the general peace, or to hold them guilty of violating their oaths or their duty to the laws of the holy empire. The States-General were sure that they had been hitherto faithful and loyal, and they were resolved to continue in that path.

As members of the holy empire, in part—as of old they were considered to be—they had rather the right to expect, instead of reproaches, assistance against the enormous power and inhuman oppression of their enemies. They had demanded it heretofore by their ambassadors, and they still continued to claim it. They urged that, according to the laws of the empire, all foreign soldiers, Spaniards, Saracens, and the like should be driven out of the limits of the empire. Through these means the German Highland and the German Netherland might be restored once more to their old friendship and unity, and might deal with each other again in amity and commerce.



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If, however, such requests could not be granted they at least begged his electoral highness and the other dukes, lords, and states to put on the deeds of Netherlanders in this laborious and heavy war the best interpretation, in order that they might, with the better courage and resolution, bear those inevitable burthens which were becoming daily heavier in this task of resistance and self-protection; in order that the provinces might not be utterly conquered, and serve, with their natural resources and advantageous situation, as 'sedes et media belli' for the destruction of neighbouring States and the building up of the contemplated universal, absolute monarchy.

The United Provinces had been compelled by overpowering necessity to take up arms. That which had resulted was and remained in 'terminis defensionis.' Their object was to protect what belonged to them, to recover that which by force or fraud had been taken from them.

In regard to excesses committed by their troops against neutral inhabitants on the border, they expressed a strong regret, together with a disposition to make all proper retribution and to cause all crimes to be punished.

They alluded to the enormous sins of this nature practised by the enemy against neutral soil. They recalled to mind that the Spaniards paid their troops ill or not at all, and that they allowed them to plunder the innocent and the neutral, while the United States had paid their troops better wages, and more punctually, than had ever been done by the greatest potentates of Europe. It was true that the States kept many cruisers off the coasts and upon the rivers, but these were to protect their own citizens and friendly traders against pirates and against the common foe. Germany derived as much benefit from this system as did the Provinces themselves.

Thus did the States-General, respectfully but resolutely, decline all proffers of intervention, which, as they were well aware, could only enure to the benefit of the enemy. Thus did they avoid being entrapped into negotiations which could only prove the most lamentable of comedies.

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A pusillanimous peace, always possible at any period  
At length the twig was becoming the tree  
Being the true religion, proved by so many testimonies  
Certainly it was worth an eighty years' war  
Chief seafaring nations of the world were already protestant  
Conceding it subsequently, after much contestation  
Fled from the land of oppression to the land of liberty  
German Highland and the German Netherland  
Little army of Maurice was becoming the model for Europe



Luxury had blunted the fine instincts of patriotism  
Maritime heretics  
Portion of these revenues savoured much of black-mail  
The divine speciality of a few transitory mortals  
The history of the Netherlands is history of liberty  
The nation which deliberately carves itself in pieces  
They had come to disbelieve in the mystery of kingcraft  
Worn nor caused to be worn the collar of the serf

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