

History of the United Netherlands, 1594 eBook

History of the United Netherlands, 1594 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. 66

History of the United Netherlands, 1594

CHAPTER XXX.

Prince Maurice lays siege to Gertruydenberg—Advantages of the new system of warfare—Progress of the besieging operations—Superiority of Maurice's manoeuvres—Adventure of Count Philip of Nassau—Capitulation of Gertruydenberg—Mutiny among the Spanish troops—Attempt of Verdugo to retake Coeworden—Suspensions of treason in the English garrison at Ostend—Letter of Queen Elizabeth to Sir Edward Norris on the subject—Second attempt on Coeworden—Assault on Groningen by Maurice—Second adventure of Philip of Nassau—Narrow escape of Prince Maurice—Surrender of Groningen—Particulars of the siege—Question of religious toleration—Progress of the United Netherlands—Condition of the "obedient" Netherlands—Incompetency of Peter Mansfeld as Governor—Archduke Ernest, the successor of



Farnese—Difficulties of his position—His unpopularity—Great achievements of the republicans—Triumphal entry of Ernest into Brussels and Antwerp—Magnificence of the spectacle—Disaffection of the Spanish troops—Great military rebellion—Philip's proposal to destroy the English fleet—His assassination plans—Plot to poison Queen Elizabeth—Conspiracies against Prince Maurice—Futile attempts at negotiation—Proposal of a marriage between Henry and the Infanta—Secret mission from Henry to the King of Spain—Special dispatch to England and the Staten—Henry obtains further aid from Queen Elizabeth and the States—Council—Anxiety of the Protestant countries to bring about a war with Spain—Aspect of affairs at the close of the year 1594.

While Philip's world-empire seemed in one direction to be so rapidly fading into cloudland there were substantial possessions of the Spanish crown which had been neglected in Brabant and Friesland.

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Two very important cities still held for the King of Spain within the territories of what could now be fairly considered the United Dutch Republic—St. Gertruydenberg and Groningen.

Early in the spring of 1593, Maurice had completed his preparations for a siege, and on the 24th March appeared before Gertruydenberg.

It was a stately, ancient city, important for its wealth, its strength, and especially for its position. For without its possession even the province of Holland could hardly consider itself mistress of its own little domains. It was seated on the ancient Meuse, swollen as it approached the sea almost to the dimension of a gulf, while from the south another stream, called the Donge, very brief in its course, but with considerable depth of water, came to mingle itself with the Meuse, exactly under the walls of the city.

The site of the place was so low that it was almost hidden and protected by its surrounding dykes. These afforded means of fortification, which had been well improved. Both by nature and art the city was one of the strongholds of the Netherlands.

Maurice had given the world a lesson in the beleaguering science at the siege of Steenwyk, such as had never before been dreamt of; but he was resolved that the operations before Gertruydenberg should constitute a masterpiece.

Nothing could be more beautiful as a production of military art, nothing, to the general reader, more insipid than its details.

On the land side, Hohenlo's headquarters were at Ramsdonck, a village about a German mile to the east of Gertruydenberg. Maurice himself was established on the west side of the city. Two bridges constructed across the Donge facilitated the communications between the two camps, while great quantities of planks and brush were laid down across the swampy roads to make them passable for waggon-trains and artillery. The first care of the young general, whose force was not more than twenty thousand men, was to protect himself rather than to assail the town.

His lines extended many miles in a circuit around the place, and his forts, breastworks, and trenches were very numerous.

The river was made use of as a natural and almost impassable ditch of defence, and windmills were freely employed to pump water into the shallows in one direction, while in others the outer fields, in quarters whence a relieving force might be expected, were turned into lakes by the same machinery. Farther outside, a system of palisade work of caltrops and man-traps—sometimes in the slang of the day called Turkish ambassadors—made the country for miles around impenetrable or very disagreeable to cavally. In a shorter interval than would have seemed possible, the battlements and fortifications of



the besieging army had risen like an exhalation out of the morass. The city of Gertruydenberg was encompassed by another city as extensive and apparently as impregnable as itself. Then, for the first time in that age, men thoroughly learned the meaning of that potent implement the spade.

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Three thousand pioneers worked night and day with pickaxe and shovel. The soldiers liked the business; for every man so employed received his ten stivers a day additional wages, punctually paid, and felt moreover that every stioke was bringing the work nearer to its conclusion.

The Spaniards no longer railed at Maurice as a hedger and ditcher. When he had succeeded in bringing a hundred great guns to bear upon the beleaguered city they likewise ceased to sneer at heavy artillery.

The Kartowen and half Kartowen were no longer considered “espanta vellacos.”

Meantime, from all the country round, the peasants flocked within the lines. Nowhere in Europe were provisions so plentiful and cheap as in the Dutch camp. Nowhere was a readier market for agricultural products, prompter payment, or more perfect security for the life and property of non-combatants. Not so much as a hen’s egg was taken unlawfully. The country people found themselves more at ease within Maurice’s lines than within any other part of the provinces, obedient or revolted. They ploughed and sowed and reaped at their pleasure, and no more striking example was ever afforded of the humanizing effect of science upon the barbarism of war, than in this siege of Gertruydenberg.

Certainly it was the intention of the prince to take his city, and when he fought the enemy it was his object to kill; but, as compared with the bloody work which Alva, and Romero, and Requesens, and so many others had done in those doomed provinces, such war-making as this seemed almost like an institution for beneficent and charitable purposes.

Visitors from the neighbourhood, from other provinces, from foreign countries, came to witness the extraordinary spectacle, and foreign generals repaired to the camp of Maurice to take practical lessons in the new art of war.

Old Peter Ernest Mansfeld, who was nominal governor of the Spanish Netherlands since the death of Farnese, rubbed his eyes and stared aghast when the completeness of the preparations for reducing the city at last broke in upon his mind. Count Fuentes was the true and confidential regent however until the destined successor to Parma should arrive; but Fuentes, although he had considerable genius for assassination, as will hereafter appear, and was an experienced and able commander of the old-fashioned school, was no match for Maurice in the scientific combinations on which the new system was founded.

In vain did the superannuated Peter call aloud upon his sofa and governor, Count Charles, to assist him in this dire dilemma. That artillery general had gone with a handful of Germans, Walloons; and other obedient Netherlanders—too few to accomplish anything abroad, too many to be spared from the provinces—to besiege



Noyon in France. But what signified the winning or losing of such a place as Noyon at exactly the moment when the Prince of Bearne, assisted by the able generalship of the Archbishop of Bourges, had just executed those famous flanking movements in the churches of St. Denis and Chartres, by which the world-empire had been effectually shattered, and Philip and the Pope completely out-manoeuvred.



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Better that the five thousand fighters under Charles Mansfeld had been around Gertruydenberg. His aged father did what he could. As many men as could be spared from the garrison of Antwerp and its neighbourhood were collected; but the Spaniards were reluctant to march, except under old Mondragon. That hero, who had done much of the hardest work, and had fought in most of the battles of the century, was nearly as old as the century. Being now turned of ninety, he thought best to keep house in Antwerp Castle: Accordingly twelve thousand foot and three thousand horse took the field under the more youthful Peter Ernest? But Peter Ernest, when his son was not there to superintend his operations, was nothing but a testy octogenarian, while the two together were not equal to the little finger of Farnese, whom Philip would have displaced, had he not fortunately died.

“Nothing is to be expected out of this place but toads and poison,” wrote Ybarra in infinite disgust to the two secretaries of state at Madrid. “I have done my best to induce Fuentes to accept that which the patent secured him, and Count Peter is complaining that Fuentes showed him the patent so late only to play him a trick. There is a rascally pack of meddlers here, and the worst of them all are the women, whom I particularly give to the devil. There is no end to the squabbles as to who shall take the lead in relieving Gertruydenberg.”

Mansfeld at last came ponderously up in the neighbourhood of Turnhout. There was a brilliant little skirmish, in the, neighbourhood of this place, in which a hundred and fifty Dutch cavalry under the famous brothers Bax defeated four hundred picked lancers of Spain and Italy. But Mansfeld could get nothing but skirmishes. In vain he plunged about among the caltrops and man-traps. In vain he knocked at the fortifications of Hohenlo on the east and of Maurice on the west. He found them impracticable, impregnable, obdurate. It was Maurice’s intention to take his town at as small sacrifice of life as possible. A trumpet was sent on some trifling business to Mansfeld, in reply to a communication made by the general to Maurice.

“Why does your master,” said the choleric veteran to the trumpeter, “why does Prince Maurice, being a lusty young commander as he is, not come out of his trenches into the open field and fight me like a man, where honour and fame await him?”

“Because my master,” answered the trumpeter, “means to live to be a lusty old commander like your excellency, and sees no reason to-day to give you an advantage.”

At this the bystanders laughed, rather at the expense of the veteran.

Meantime there were not many incidents within the lines or within the city to vary the monotony of the scientific siege.

On the land side, as has been seen, the city was enclosed and built out of human sight by another Gertruydenberg. On the wide estuary of the Meuse, a chain of war ships

encircled the sea-front, in shape of a half moon, lying so close to each other that it was scarcely possible even for a messenger to swim out of a dark night.



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The hardy adventurers who attempted that feat with tidings of despair were almost invariably captured.

This blockading fleet took regular part in the daily cannonade; while, on the other hand, the artillery practice from the landbatteries of Maurice and Hohenlo was more perfect than anything ever known before in the Netherlands or France.

And the result was that in the course of the cannonade which lasted nearly ninety days, not more than four houses in the city escaped injury. The approaches were brought, every hour, nearer and nearer to the walls. With subterranean lines converging in the form of the letter Y, the prince had gradually burrowed his way beneath the principal bastion.

Hohenlo, representative of the older school of strategy, had on one occasion ventured to resist the authority of the commander-in-chief. He had constructed a fort at Ramsdonck. Maurice then commanded the erection of another, fifteen hundred yards farther back. It was as much a part of his purpose to defend himself against the attempts of Mansfeld's relieving force, as to go forward against the city. Hohenlo objected that it would be impossible to sustain himself against a sudden attack in so isolated a position. Maurice insisted. In the midst of the altercation Hohenlo called to the men engaged in throwing up the new fortifications: "Here, you captains and soldiers," he cried, "you are delivered up here to be butchered. You may drop work and follow me to the old fort."

"And I swear to you," said Maurice quietly, "that the first man who moves from this spot shall be hanged."

No one moved. The fort was completed and held to the end; Hohenlo sulkily acquiescing in the superiority which this stripling—his former pupil—had at last vindicated over all old-fashioned men-at-arms.

From the same cause which was apt to render Hohenlo's services inefficient, the prince was apt to suffer inconvenience in the persons placed in still nearer relation to himself. Count Philip of Nassau, brother of the wise and valiant Lewis William, had already done much brilliant campaigning against the Spaniards both in France and the provinces. Unluckily, he was not only a desperate fighter but a mighty drinker, and one day, after a dinner-party and potent carouse at Colonel Brederode's quarters, he thought proper, in doublet and hose, without armour of any kind, to mount his horse, in order to take a solitary survey of the enemy's works. Not satisfied with this piece of reconnoitering—which he effected with much tipsy gravity, but probably without deriving any information likely to be of value to the commanding general—he then proceeded to charge in person a distant battery. The deed was not commendable in a military point of view. A fire was opened upon him at long range so soon as he was discovered, and at the same time the sergeant-major of his regiment and an equerry of Prince Maurice started

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in pursuit, determined to bring him off if possible, before his life had been thus absurdly sacrificed. Fortunately for him they came to the rescue in time, pulled him from his horse, and succeeded in bringing him away unharmed. The sergeant-major, however, Sinisky by name, while thus occupied in preserving the count's life, was badly wounded in the leg by a musket-shot from the fort; which casualty was the only result of this after-dinner assault.

As the siege proceeded, and as the hopes of relief died away, great confusion began to reign within the city. The garrison, originally of a thousand veterans, besides burgher militia, had been much diminished. Two commandants of the place, one after another, had lost their lives. On the 1st of June, Governor De Masieres, Captain Mongyn, the father-confessor of the garrison, and two soldiers, being on the top of the great church tower taking observations, were all brought down with one cannon-shot. Thus the uses of artillery were again proved to be something more than to scare cowards.

The final result seemed to have been brought about almost by accident, if accident could be admitted as a factor in such accurate calculations as those of Maurice. On the 24th June Captains Haen and Bievry were relieving watch in the trenches near the great north ravelin of the town—a bulwark which had already been much undermined from below and weakened above. Being adventurous officers, it occurred to them suddenly to scale the wall of the fort and reconnoitre what was going on in the town. It was hardly probable that they would come back alive from the expedition, but they nevertheless threw some planks across the ditch, and taking a few soldiers with them, climbed cautiously up. Somewhat to his own surprise, still more to that of the Spanish sentinels, Bievry in a few minutes found himself within the ravelin. He was closely followed by Captain Haen, Captain Kalf, and by half a company of soldiers. The alarm was given. There was a fierce hand-to-hand struggle. Sixteen of the bold stormers fell, and nine of the garrison of the fort. The rest fled into the city. The governor of the place, Captain Gysant, rushing to the rescue without staying to put on his armour, was killed. Count Solms, on the other hand, came from the besieging camp into the ravelin to investigate the sudden uproar. To his profound astonishment he was met there, after a brief interval, by a deputation from the city, asking for terms of surrender. The envoys had already been for some little time looking in vain for a responsible person with whom to treat. When Maurice was informed of the propositions he thought it at first a trick; for he had known nothing of the little adventure of the three captains. Soon afterwards he came into a battery whither the deputies had been brought, and the terms of capitulation were soon agreed upon.

Next day the garrison were allowed to go out with sidearms and personal baggage, and fifty waggons were lent them by the victor to bring their wounded men to Antwerp.



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Thus was Gertruydenberg surrendered in the very face of Peter Mansfeld, who only became aware of the fact by the salvos of artillery fired in honour of the triumph, and by the blaze of illumination which broke forth over camp and city.

The sudden result was an illustration of the prince's perfect arrangements. When Maurice rode into the town, he found it strong enough and sufficiently well provisioned to have held out many a long day. But it had been demonstrated to the besieged that relief was impossible, and that the surrender on one day or another, after the siege operations should be brought to their close, was certain. The inexorable genius of the commander—skilled in a science which to the coarser war-makers of that age seemed almost superhuman—hovered above them like a fate. It was as well to succumb on the 24th June as to wait till the 24th July.

Moreover the great sustaining principle—resistance to the foreigner— which had inspired the deeds of daring, the wonders of endurance, in the Dutch cities beleaguered so remorselessly by the Spaniard twenty years earlier in the century, was wanting.

In surrendering to the born Netherlander—the heroic chieftain of the illustrious house of Nassau—these Netherlanders were neither sullyng their flag nor injuring their country. Enough had been done for military honour in the gallant resistance, in which a large portion of the garrison had fallen. Nor was that religious superstition so active within the city, which three years before had made miracles possible in Paris when a heretic sovereign was to be defied by his own subjects. It was known that even if the public ceremonies of the Catholic Church were likely to be suspended for a time after the surrender, at least the rights of individual conscience and private worship within individual households would be tolerated, and there was no papal legate with fiery eloquence persuading a city full of heroic dupes that it was more virtuous for men or women to eat their own children than to forego one high mass, or to wink at a single conventicle.

After all, it was no such bitter hardship for the citizens of Gertruydenberg to participate in the prosperity of the rising and thriving young republic, and to enjoy those municipal and national liberties which her sister cities had found so sweet.

Nothing could be calmer or more reasonable than such a triumph, nothing less humiliating or less disastrous than such a surrender.

The problem was solved, the demonstration was made. To open their gates to the soldiers of the Union was not to admit the hordes of a Spanish commander with the avenging furies of murder, pillage, rape, which ever followed in their train over the breach of a captured city.

To an enemy bated or dreaded to the uttermost mortal capacity, that well-fortified and opulent city might have held out for months, and only when the arms and the fraud of

the foe without, and of famine within, had done their work, could it have bowed its head to the conqueror, and submitted to the ineffable tortures which would be the necessary punishment of its courage.



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Four thousand shots had been fired from the siege-guns upon the city, and three hundred upon the relieving force.

The besieging army numbered in all nine thousand one hundred and fifty men of all arms, and they lost during the eighty-five days' siege three hundred killed and four hundred wounded.

After the conclusion of these operations, and the thorough remodelling of the municipal government of the important city thus regained to the republic, Maurice occupied himself with recruiting and refreshing his somewhat exhausted little army. On the other hand, old Count Mansfeld, dissatisfied with the impotent conclusion to his attempts, retired to Brussels to be much taunted by the insolent Fuentes. He at least escaped very violent censure on the part of his son Charles, for that general, after his superfluous conquest of Noyon, while returning towards the Netherlands, far too tardily to succour Gertruydenberg, had been paralyzed in all his movements by a very extensive mutiny which broke out among the Spanish troops in the province of Artois. The disorder went through all its regular forms. A town was taken, an Eletto was appointed. The country-side was black-mailed or plundered, and the rebellion lasted some thirteen months. Before it was concluded there was another similar outbreak among the Italians, together with the Walloons and other obedient Netherlanders in Hainault, who obliged the city of Mons to collect nine hundred florins a day for them. The consequence of these military rebellions was to render the Spanish crown almost powerless during the whole year, within the provinces nominally subject to its sway. The cause—as always—was the non-payment of these veterans' wages, year after year. It was impossible for Philip, with all the wealth of the Indies and Mexico pouring through the Danaid sieve of the Holy League in France, to find the necessary funds to save the bronzed and war-worn instruments of his crimes in the Netherlands from starving and from revolt.

Meantime there was much desultory campaigning in Friesland. Verdugo and Frederic van den Berg picked up a few cities, and strong places which had thrown off their allegiance September, to the king—Auerzyl, Schlochteren, Winschoten, Wedde, Ootmarzum—and invested the much more important town of Coeworden, which Maurice had so recently reduced to the authority of the Union. Verdugo's force was insufficient, however, and he had neither munitions nor provisions for a long siege. Winter was coming on; and the States, aware that he would soon be obliged to retire from before the well-garrisoned and fortified place, thought it unnecessary to interfere with him. After a very brief demonstration the Portuguese veteran was obliged to raise the siege.



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There were also certain vague attempts made by the enemy to re-possess himself of those most important seaports which had been pledged to the English queen. On a previous page the anxiety has been indicated with which Sir Robert Sydney regarded the withdrawal of the English troops in the Netherlands for the sake of assisting the French king. This palpable breach of the treaty had necessarily weakened England's hold on the affections of the Netherlanders, and awakened dark suspicions that treason might be impending at Flushing or Ostend. The suspicions were unjust—so far as the governors of those places were concerned—for Sydney and Norris were as loyal as they were intelligent and brave; but the trust in their characters was not more implicit than it had been in that of Sir William Stanley before the commission of his crime. It was now believed that the enemy was preparing for a sudden assault upon Ostend, with the connivance, it was feared, of a certain portion of the English garrison. The intelligence was at once conveyed to her Majesty's Government by Sir Edward Norris, and they determined to take a lesson from past experience. Norris was at once informed that in view of the attack which he apprehended, his garrison should be strengthened by five hundred men under Sir Conyers Clifford from certain companies in Flushing, and that other reinforcements should be sent from the English troops in Normandy. The governor was ordered to look well after his captains and soldiers, to remind them, in the queen's name, of their duty to herself and to the States, to bid all beware of sullyng the English name, to make close investigations into any possible intrigues of the garrison with the enemy, and, should any culprits be found, to bring them at once to condign punishment.

The queen, too, determined that there should be no blighting of English honour, if she could prevent it by her warnings, indited with her own hand a characteristic letter to Sir Edward Norris, to accompany the more formal despatch of Lord Burghley. Thus it ran "Ned!—

"Though you have some tainted sheep among your flock, let not that serve for excuse for the rest. We trust you are so carefully regarded as nought shall be left for your excuses, but either ye lack heart or want will; for of fear we will not make mention, as that our soul abhors, and we assure ourselves you will never discern suspicion of it. Now or never let for the honour of us and our nation, each man be so much of bolder heart as their cause is good, and their honour must be according, remembering the old goodness of our God, who never yet made us fail His needful help, who ever bless you as I with my prince's hand beseech Him."

The warnings and preparations proved sufficiently effective, and the great schemes with which the new royal governor of the Netherlands was supposed to be full—a mere episode in which was the conquest of Ostend—seemed not so formidable as their shadows had indicated. There was, in the not very distant future, to be a siege of Ostend, which the world would not soon forget, but perhaps the place would not yield to a sudden assault. Its resistance, on the contrary, might prove more protracted than was

then thought possible. But the chronicle of events must not be anticipated. For the present, Ostend was safe.

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Early in the following spring, Verdugo again appeared before Coeworden in force. It was obvious that the great city of Groningen, the mistress of all the north-eastern provinces, would soon be attacked, and Coeworden was the necessary base of any operations against the place. Fortunately for the States, William Lewis had in the preceding autumn occupied and fortified the only avenue through the Bourtange morass, so that when Verdugo sat down before Coeworden, it was possible for Maurice, by moving rapidly, to take the royal governor at a disadvantage.

Verdugo had eight thousand picked troops, including two thousand Walloon cavalry, troopers who must have been very formidable, if they were to be judged by the prowess of one of their captains, Gaucier by name. This obedient Netherlander was in the habit of boasting that he had slain four hundred and ten men with his own hand, including several prisoners and three preachers; but the rest of those warriors were not so famed for their martial achievements.

The peril, however, was great, and Prince Maurice, trifling not a moment, threw himself with twelve thousand infantry, Germans, Frisians, Scotch, English, and Hollanders, and nearly two thousand horse, at once upon the road between the Vecht and the Bourtange morass. On the 6th of May, Verdugo found the States' commander-in-chief entrenched and impregnable, squarely established upon his line of communications. He reconnoitred, called a council of war, and decided that to assail him were madness; to remain, destruction. On the night of the 6th of May, he broke up his camp and stole away in the darkness, without sound of drum or trumpet, leaving all his fortifications and burning all his huts.

Thus had Maurice, after showing the world how strong places were to be reduced, given a striking exhibition of the manner in which they were to be saved.

Coeworden, after thirty-one weeks' investment, was relieved.

The stadholder now marched upon Groningen. This city was one of the most splendid and opulent of all the Netherland towns. Certainly it should have been one of the most ancient in Europe, since it derived its name— according to that pains-taking banker, Francis Guicciardini—“from Grun, a Trojan gentleman,” who, nevertheless, according to Munster, was “a Frenchman by birth.”—“Both theories, however, might be true,” added the conscientious Florentine, “as the French have always claimed to be descended from the relics of Troy.” A simpler-minded antiquary might have babbled of green fields, since ‘groenighe,’ or greenness, was a sufficiently natural appellation for a town surrounded as was Groningen on the east and west by the greenest and fattest of pastures. In population it was only exceeded by Antwerp and Amsterdam. Situate on the line where upper and nether Germany blend into one, the capital of a great province whose very name was synonymous with liberty, and whose hardy sons had clone fierce battle with



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despotism in every age, so long as there had been human record of despotism and of battles, Groningen had fallen into the hands of the foreign foe, not through the prowess of the Spaniard but the treason of the Netherlander. The baseness of the brilliant, trusted, valiant, treacherous young Renneberg has been recorded on a previous page of these volumes. For thirteen years long the republic had chafed at this acquisition of the hated enemy within its very heart. And now the day had come when a blow should be struck for its deliverance by the ablest soldier that had ever shown himself in those regions, one whom the commonwealth had watched over from his cradle.

For in Groningen there was still a considerable party in favour of the Union, although the treason of Renneberg had hitherto prevented both city and province from incorporating themselves in the body politic of the United Netherlands. Within the precincts were five hundred of Verdugo's veterans under George Lanckema, stationed at a faubourg called Schuytendiess. In the city there was, properly speaking, no garrison, for the citizens in the last few years had come to value themselves on their fidelity to church and king, and to take a sorry pride in being false to all that was noble in their past. Their ancestors had wrested privilege after privilege at the sword's point from the mailed hands of dukes and emperors, until they were almost a self-governing republic; their courts of justice recognizing no appeal to higher powers, even under the despotic sway of Charles V. And now, under the reign of his son, and in the feebleness of that reign, the capital of the free Frisians—the men whom their ancient pagan statutes had once declared to be “free so long as the wind blew out of the clouds”—relied upon the trained bands of her burghers enured to arms and well-provided with all munitions of war to protect her, not against foreign tyranny nor domestic sedition, but against liberty and against law.

For the representative of the most ancient of the princely houses of Europe, a youth whose ancestors had been emperors when the forefathers of Philip, long-descended as he was, were but country squires, was now knocking at their gates. Not as a conqueror and a despot, but as the elected first magistrate and commander-in-chief of the freest commonwealth in the world, Maurice of Nassau, at the head of fifteen thousand Netherlanders, countrymen of their own, now summoned the inhabitants of the town and province to participate with their fellow citizens in all the privileges and duties of the prosperous republic.

It seemed impossible that such an appeal could be resisted by force of arms. Rather it would seem that the very walls should have fallen at his feet at the first blast of the trumpet; but there was military honour, there was religious hatred, there was the obstinacy of party. More than all, there were half a dozen Jesuits within the town, and to those ablest of generals in times of civil war it was mainly owing that the siege of Groningen was protracted longer than under other circumstances would have been possible.

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It is not my purpose to describe in detail the scientific operations during the sixty-five days between the 20th May and the 24th July. Again the commander-in-chief enlightened the world by an exhibition of a more artistic and humane style of warfare than previously to his appearance on the military stage had been known. But the daily phenomena of the Leaguer—although they have been minutely preserved by most competent eyewitnesses—are hardly entitled to a place except in special military histories where, however, they should claim the foremost rank.

The fortifications of the city were of the most splendid and substantial character known to the age. The ditches, the ravelins, the curtains, the towers were as thoroughly constructed as the defences of any place in Europe. It was therefore necessary that Maurice and his cousin Lewis should employ all their learning, all their skill, and their best artillery to reduce this great capital of the Eastern Netherlands. Again the scientific coil of approaches wound itself around and around the doomed stronghold; again were constructed the galleries, the covered ways, the hidden mines, where soldiers, transformed to gnomes, burrowed and fought within the bowels of the earth; again that fatal letter Y advanced slowly under ground, stretching its deadly prongs nearer and nearer up to the walls; and again the system of defences against a relieving force was so perfectly established that Verdugo or Mansfield, with what troops they could muster, seemed as powerless as the pewter soldiers with which Maurice in his boyhood—not yet so long passed away—was wont to puzzle over the problems which now practically engaged his early manhood. Again, too, strangely enough, it is recorded that Philip Nassau, at almost the same period of the siege as in that of Gertruydenberg, signalized himself by a deed of drunken and superfluous daring. This time the dinner party was at the quarters of Count Solms, in honour of the Prince of Anhalt, where, after potations pottle deep, Count Philip rushed from the dinner-table to the breach, not yet thoroughly practicable, of the north ravelin, and, entirely without armour, mounted pike in hand to the assault, proposing to carry the fort by his own unaided exertions. Another officer, one Captain Vaillant, still more beside himself than was the count, inspired him to these deeds of valour by assuring him that the mine was to be sprung under the ravelin that afternoon, and that it was a plot on the part of the Holland boatmen to prevent the soldiers who had been working so hard and so long in the mines from taking part in the honours of the assault. The count was with difficulty brought off with a whole skin and put to bed. Yet despite these disgraceful pranks there is no doubt that a better and braver officer than he was hardly to be found even among the ten noble Nassaus who at that moment were fighting for the cause of Dutch liberty—fortunately with more sobriety than he at all times



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displayed. On the following day, Prince Maurice, making a reconnoissance of the works with his usual calmness, yet with the habitual contempt of personal danger which made so singular a contrast with the cautious and painstaking characteristics of his strategy, very narrowly escaped death. A shot from the fort struck so hard upon the buckler under cover of which he was taking his observations as to fell him to the ground. Sir Francis Vere, who was with the prince under the same buckler, likewise measured his length in the trench, but both escaped serious injury.

Pauli, one of the States commissioners present in the camp, wrote to Barneveld that it was to be hoped that the accident might prove a warning to his Excellency. He had repeatedly remonstrated with him, he said, against his reckless exposure of himself to unnecessary danger, but he was so energetic and so full of courage that it was impossible to restrain him from being everywhere every day.

Three days later, the letter Y did its work. At ten o'clock 15 July, of the night of the 15th July, Prince Maurice ordered the mines to be sprung, when the north ravelin was blown into the air, and some forty of the garrison with it. Two of them came flying into the besiegers' camp, and, strange to say, one was alive and sound. The catastrophe finished the sixty-five days' siege, the breach was no longer defensible, the obstinacy of the burghers was exhausted, and capitulation followed. In truth, there had been a subterranean intrigue going on for many weeks, which was almost as effective as the mine. A certain Jan to Boer had been going back and forth between camp and city, under various pretexts and safe-conducts, and it had at last appeared that the Jesuits and the five hundred of Verdugo's veterans were all that prevented Groningen from returning to the Union. There had been severe fighting within the city itself, for the Jesuits had procured the transfer of the veterans from the faubourg to the town itself, and the result of all these operations, political, military, and jesuitical, was that on 22nd July articles of surrender were finally agreed upon between Maurice and a deputation from the magistrates, the guilds, and commander Lanckema.

The city was to take its place thenceforth as a member of the Union. William Lewis, already stadholder of Friesland for the united States, was to be recognised as chief magistrate of the whole province, which was thus to retain all its ancient privileges, laws, and rights of self-government, while it exchanged its dependence on a distant, foreign, and decaying despotism for incorporation with a young and vigorous commonwealth.

It was arranged that no religion but the reformed religion, as then practised in the united republic, should be publicly exercised in the province, but that no man should be questioned as to his faith, or troubled in his conscience: Cloisters and ecclesiastical property were to remain 'in statu quo,' until the States-General should come to a definite conclusion on these subjects.

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Universal amnesty was proclaimed for all offences and quarrels. Every citizen or resident foreigner was free to remain in or to retire from the town or province, with full protection to his person and property, and it was expressly provided in the articles granted to Lanckema that his soldiers should depart with arms and baggage, leaving to Prince Maurice their colours only, while the prince furnished sufficient transportation for their women and their wounded. The property of Verdugo, royal stadholder of the province, was to be respected, and to remain in the city, or to be taken thence under safe conduct, as might be preferred.

Ten thousand cannon-shot had been fired against the city. The cost of powder and shot consumed was estimated at a hundred thousand florins. Four hundred of the besiegers had been killed, and a much larger number wounded. The army had been further weakened by sickness and numerous desertions. Of the besieged, three hundred soldiers in all were killed, and a few citizens.

Thirty-six cannon were taken, besides mortars, and it was said that eight hundred tons of powder, and plenty of other ammunition and provisions were found in the place.

On the 23rd July Maurice and William Lewis entered the city. Some of the soldiers were disappointed at the inexorable prohibition of pillage; but it was the purpose of Maurice, as of the States-General, to place the sister province at once in the unsullied possession of the liberty and the order for which the struggle with Spain had, been carried on so long. If the limitation of public religious worship seemed harsh, it should be remembered that Romanism in a city occupied by Spanish troops had come to mean unmitigated hostility to the republic. In the midst of civil war, the hour for that religious liberty which was the necessary issue of the great conflict had not yet struck. It was surely something gained for humanity that no man should be questioned at all as to his creed in countries where it was so recently the time-honoured practice to question him on the rack, and to burn him if the answer was objectionable to the inquirer.

It was something that the holy Inquisition had been for ever suppressed in the land. It must be admitted, likewise, that the terms of surrender and the spectacle of re-established law and order which succeeded the capture of Groningen furnished a wholesome contrast to the scenes of ineffable horror that had been displayed whenever a Dutch town had fallen into the hands of Philip.

And thus the commonwealth of the United Netherlands, through the practical military genius and perseverance of Maurice and Lewis William, and the substantial statesmanship of Barneveld and his colleagues, had at last rounded itself into definite shape; while in all directions toward which men turned their eyes, world-empire, imposing and gorgeous as it had seemed for an interval, was vanishing before its votaries like a mirage. The republic, placed on the solid foundations of civil liberty, self-government, and reasonable law, was steadily consolidating itself.



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No very prominent movements were undertaken by the forces of the Union during the remainder of the year. According to the agreements with Henry IV. it had been necessary to provide that monarch with considerable assistance to carry on his new campaigns, and it was therefore difficult for Maurice to begin for the moment upon the larger schemes which he had contemplated.

Meantime the condition of the obedient Netherlands demands a hasty glance.

On the death of brother Alexander the Capuchin, Fuentes produced a patent by which Peter Ernest Mansfeld was provisionally appointed governor, in case the post should become vacant. During the year which followed, that testy old campaigner had indulged himself in many petty feuds with all around him, but had effected, as we have seen, very little to maintain the king's authority either in the obedient or disobedient provinces.

His utter incompetency soon became most painfully apparent. His more than puerile dependence upon his son, and the more than paternal severity exercised over him by Count Charles, were made manifest to all the world. The son ruled the trembling but peevish old warrior with an iron rod, and endless was their wrangling with Fuentes and all the other Spaniards. Between the querulousness of the one and the ferocity of the other, poor Fuentes became sick of his life.

"'Tis a diabolical genius, this count Charles," said Ybarra, "and so full of ambition that he insists on governing everybody just as he rules his father. As for me, until the archduke comes I am a fish out of water."

The true successor to Farnese was to be, the Archduke Ernest, one of the many candidates for the hand of the Infanta, and for the throne of that department of the Spanish dominions which was commonly called France. Should Philip not appropriate the throne without further scruple, in person, it was on the whole decided that his favorite nephew should be the satrap of that outlying district of the Spanish empire. In such case obedient France might be annexed to obedient Netherlands, and united under the sway of Archduke Ernest.

But these dreams had proved in the cold air of reality but midsummer madness. When the name of the archduke was presented to the estates as King Ernest I. of France, even the most unscrupulous and impassioned Leaguers of that country fairly hung their heads. That a foreign prince, whose very name had never been before heard of by the vast bulk of the French population, should be deliberately placed upon the throne of St. Louis and Hugh Capet, was a humiliation hard to defend, profusely as Philip had scattered the Peruvian and Mexican dollars among the great ones of the nation, in order to accomplish his purpose.

So Archduke Ernest, early in the year 1594, came to Brussels, but he came as a gloomy, disappointed man. To be a bachelor-governor of the impoverished, exhausted,



half-rebellious, and utterly forlorn little remnant of the Spanish Netherlands, was a different position from that of husband of Clara Isabella and king of France, on which his imagination had been feeding so long.

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For nearly the whole twelvemonth subsequent to the death of Farnese, the Spanish envoy to the Imperial court had been endeavouring to arrange for the departure of the archduke to his seat of government in the Netherlands. The prince himself was willing enough, but there were many obstacles on the part of the emperor and his advisers. "Especially there is one very great impossibility," said San Clemente, "and that is the poverty of his Highness, which is so great that my own is not greater in my estate. So I don't see how he can stir a step without money. Here they'll not furnish him with a penny, and for himself he possesses nothing but debts." The emperor was so little pleased with the adventure that in truth, according to the same authority, he looked upon the new viceroy's embarrassments with considerable satisfaction, so that it was necessary for Philip to provide for his travelling expenses.

Ernest was next brother of the Emperor Rudolph, and as intensely devoted to the interests of the Roman Church as was that potentate himself, or even his uncle Philip.

He was gentle, weak, melancholy, addicted to pleasure, a martyr to the gout. He brought no soldiers to the provinces, for the emperor, threatened with another world-empire on his pagan flank, had no funds nor troops to send to the assistance of his Christian brother-in-law and uncle. Moreover, it may be imagined that Rudolph, despite the bonds of religion and consanguinity, was disposed to look coldly on the colossal projects of Philip.

So Ernest brought no troops, but he brought six hundred and seventy gentlemen, pages, and cooks, and five hundred and thirty-four horses, not to charge upon the rebellious Dutchmen withal, but to draw coaches and six.

There was trouble enough prepared for the new governor at his arrival. The great Flemish and Walloon nobles were quarrelling fiercely with the Spaniards and among themselves for office and for precedence. Arschot and his brother Havre both desired the government of Flanders; so did Arenberg. All three, as well as other gentlemen, were scrambling for the majordomo's office in Ernest's palace. Havre wanted the finance department as well, but Ybarra, who was a financier, thought the public funds in his hands would be in a perilous condition, inasmuch as he was provinces was accounted the most covetous man in all the provinces.

So soon as the archduke was known to be approaching the capital there was a most ludicrous race run by all these grandees, in order to be the first to greet his Highness. While Mansfeld and Fuentes were squabbling, as usual, Arschot got the start of both, and arrived at Treves. Then the decrepit Peter Ernest struggled as far as Luxembourg, while Fuentes posted on to Namur. The archduke was much perplexed as to the arranging of all these personages on the day of his entrance into Brussels. In the council of state it was still worse. Arschot claimed



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the first place as duke and as senior member, Peter Ernest demanded it as late governor-general and because of his grey hairs. Never was imperial highness more disturbed, never was clamour for loaves and fishes more deafening. The caustic financier—whose mind was just then occupied with the graver matter of assassination on a considerable scale—looked with profound contempt at the spectacle thus presented to him. “There has been the devil’s own row,” said he, “between these counts about offices, and also about going out to receive the most serene archduke. I have had such work with them that by the salvation of my soul I swear if it were to last a fortnight longer I would go off afoot to Spain, even if I were sure of dying in jail after I got there. I have reconciled the two counts (Fuentes and Mansfeld) with each other a hundred times, and another hundred times they have fallen out again, and behaved themselves with such vulgarity that I blushed for them. They are both to blame, but at any rate we have now got the archduke housed, and he will get us out of this embarrassment.”

The archduke came with rather a prejudice against the Spaniards— the result doubtless of his disappointment in regard to France—and he manifested at first an extreme haughtiness to those of that nation with whom he came in contact. A Castilian noble of high rank, having audience with him on one occasion, replaced his hat after salutation, as he had been accustomed to do—according to the manner of grandees of Spain— during the government of Farnese. The hat was rudely struck from his head by the archduke’s chamberlain, and he was himself ignominiously thrust out of the presence. At another time an interview was granted to two Spanish gentlemen who had business to transact. They made their appearance in magnificent national costume, splendidly embroidered in gold. After a brief hearing they were dismissed, with appointment of another audience for a few days later. When they again presented themselves they found the archduke with his court jester standing at his side, the buffoon being attired in a suit precisely similar to their own, which in the interval had been prepared by the court tailor.

Such amenities as these did not increase the popularity of Ernest with the high-spirited Spaniards, nor was it palatable to them that it should be proposed to supersede the old fighting Portuguese, Verdugo, as governor and commander-in-chief for the king in Friesland, by Frederic van den Berg, a renegade Netherlander, unworthy cousin of the Nassaus, who had never shown either military or administrative genius.

Nor did he succeed in conciliating the Flemings or the Germans by these measures. In truth he was, almost without his own knowledge, under the controlling influence of Fuentes, the most unscrupulous and dangerous Spaniard of them all, while his every proceeding was closely watched not only by Diego and Stephen Ybarra, but even by Christoval de Moura, one of Philip’s two secretaries of state who at this crisis made a visit to Brussels.



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These men were indignant at the imbecility of the course pursued in the obedient provinces. They knew that the incapacity of the Government to relieve the sieges of Gertruydenberg and Groningen had excited the contempt of Europe, and was producing a most damaging effect on Spanish authority throughout Christendom. They were especially irritated by the presence of the arch-intriguer, Mayenne, in Brussels, even after all his double dealings had been so completely exposed that a blind man could have read them. Yet there was Mayenne, consorting with the archduke, and running up a great bill of sixteen thousand florins at the hotel, which the royal paymaster declined to settle for want of funds, notwithstanding Ernest's order to that effect, and there was no possibility of inducing the viceroy to arrest him, much as he had injured and defrauded the king.

How severely Ybarra and Feria denounced Mayenne has been seen; but remonstrances about this and other grave mistakes of administration were lost upon Ernest, or made almost impossible by his peculiar temper. "If I speak of these things to his Highness," said Ybarra, "he will begin to cry, as he always does."

Ybarra, however, thought it his duty secretly to give the king frequent information as to the blasted and forlorn condition of the provinces. "This sick man will die in our arms," he said, "without our wishing to kill him." He also left no doubt in the royal mind as to the utter incompetency of the archduke for his office. Although he had much Christianity, amiability, and good intentions, he was so unused to business, so slow and so lazy, so easily persuaded by those around him, as to be always falling into errors. He was the servant of his own servants, particularly of those least disposed to the king's service and most attentive to their own interests. He had endeavoured to make himself beloved by the natives of the country, while the very reverse of this had been the result.

"As to his agility and the strength of his body," said the Spaniard, as if he were thinking of certain allegories which were to mark the archduke's triumphal entry, "they are so deficient as to leave him unfit for arms. I consider him incapable of accompanying an army to the field, and we find him so new to all such affairs as constitute government and the conduct of warlike business, that he could not steer his way without some one to enlighten and direct him."

It was sometimes complained of in those days—and the thought has even prolonged itself until later times—that those republicans of the United Netherlands had done and could do great things; but that, after all, there was no grandeur about them. Certainly they had done great things. It was something to fight the Ocean for ages, and patiently and firmly to shut him out from his own domain. It was something to extinguish the Spanish Inquisition—a still more cruel and devouring enemy than the sea. It was something that the fugitive spirit of civil and religious liberty had found at last its most substantial and steadfast home upon those storm-washed shoals and shifting sandbanks.

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It was something to come to the rescue of England in her great agony, and help to save her from invasion. It was something to do more than any nation but England, and as much as she, to assist Henry the Huguenot to the throne of his ancestors and to preserve the national unity of France which its own great ones had imperilled. It was something to found two magnificent universities, cherished abodes of science and of antique lore, in the midst of civil commotions and of resistance to foreign oppression. It was something, at the same period, to lay the foundation of a system of common schools—so cheap as to be nearly free—for rich and poor alike, which, in the words of one of the greatest benefactors to the young republic, “would be worth all the soldiers, arsenals, armouries, munitions, and alliances in the world.” It was something to make a revolution, as humane as it was effective, in military affairs, and to create an army whose camps were European academies. It was something to organize, at the same critical period, on the most skilful and liberal scale, to carry out with unexampled daring, sagacity, and fortitude, great voyages of discovery to the polar regions, and to open new highways for commerce, new treasures for science. Many things of this nature had been done by the new commonwealth; but, alas! she did not drape herself melodramatically, nor stalk about with heroic wreath and cothurn. She was altogether without grandeur.

When Alva had gained his signal victories, and followed them up by those prodigious massacres which, but for his own and other irrefragable testimony, would seem too monstrous for belief, he had erected a colossal statue to himself, attired in the most classical of costumes, and surrounded with the most mythological of attributes. Here was grandeur. But William the Silent, after he had saved the republic, for which he had laboured during his whole lifetime and was destined to pour out his heart’s blood, went about among the brewers and burghers with unbuttoned doublet and woollen bargeman’s waistcoat. It was justly objected to his clothes, by the euphuistic Fulke Greville, that a meanborn student of the Inns of Court would have been ashamed to walk about London streets in them.

And now the engineering son of that shabbily-dressed personage had been giving the whole world lessons in the science of war, and was fairly perfecting the work which William and his great contemporaries had so well begun. But if all this had been merely doing great things without greatness, there was one man in the Netherlands who knew what grandeur was. He was not a citizen of the disobedient republic, however, but a loyal subject of the obedient provinces, and his name was John Baptist Houwaerts, an eminent schoolmaster of Brussels. He was still more eminent as a votary of what was called “Rhetoric” and as an arranger of triumphal processions and living pictures.

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The arrival of Archduke Ernest at the seat of the provincial Government offered an opportunity, which had long been wanting, for a display of John Baptist's genius. The new viceroy was in so shattered a condition of health, so crippled with the gout, as to be quite unable to stand, and it required the services of several lackeys to lift him into and out of his carriage. A few days of repose therefore were indispensable to him before he could make his "joyous entrance" into the capital. But the day came at last, and the exhibition was a masterpiece.

It might have seemed that the abject condition of the Spanish provinces— desolate, mendicant, despairing—would render holiday making impossible. But although almost every vestige of the ancient institutions had vanished from the obedient Netherlands as a reward for their obedience; although to civil and religious liberty, law, order, and a thriving commercial and manufacturing existence, such as had been rarely witnessed in the world, had succeeded the absolute tyranny of Jesuits, universal beggary, and a perennial military mutiny—setting Government at defiance and plundering the people—there was one faithful never deserted Belgica, and that was Rhetoric.

Neither the magnificence nor the pedantry of the spectacles by which the entry of the mild and inefficient Ernest into Brussels and Antwerp was now solemnized had ever been surpassed. The town councils, stimulated by hopes absolutely without foundation as to great results to follow the advent of the emperor's brother, had voted large sums and consumed many days in anxious deliberation upon the manner in which they should be expended so as most to redound to the honour of Ernest and the reputation of the country.

In place of the "bloody tragedies of burning, murdering, and ravishing," of which the provinces had so long been the theatre, it was resolved that, "Rhetoric's sweet comedies, amorous jests, and farces," should gladden all eyes and hearts. A stately procession of knights and burghers in historical and mythological costumes, followed by ships, dromedaries, elephants, whales, giants, dragons, and other wonders of the sea and shore, escorted the archduke into the city. Every street and square was filled with triumphal arches, statues and platforms, on which the most ingenious and thoroughly classical living pictures were exhibited. There was hardly an eminent deity of Olympus, or hero of ancient history, that was not revived and made visible to mortal eyes in the person of Ernestus of Austria.

On a framework fifty-five feet high and thirty-three feet in breadth he was represented as Apollo hurling his darts at an enormous Python, under one of whose fore-paws struggled an unfortunate burgher, while the other clutched a whole city; Tellus, meantime, with her tower on her head, kneeling anxious and imploring at the feet of her deliverer. On another stage Ernest assumed the shape of Perseus; Belgica that of

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the bound and despairing Andromeda. On a third, the interior of Etna was revealed, when Vulcan was seen urging his Cyclops to forge for Ernest their most tremendous thunderbolts with which to smite the foes of the provinces, those enemies being of course the English and the Hollanders. Venus, the while, timidly presented an arrow to her husband, which he was requested to sharpen, in order that when the wars were over Cupid, therewith might pierce the heart of some beautiful virgin, whose charms should reward Ernest—fortunately for the female world, still a bachelor—for his victories and his toils.

The walls of every house were hung with classic emblems and inscribed with Latin verses. All the pedagogues of Brussels and Antwerp had been at work for months, determined to amaze the world with their dithyrambics and acrostics, and they had outdone themselves.

Moreover, in addition to all these theatrical spectacles and pompous processions—accompanied as they were by blazing tar-barrels, flying dragons, and leagues of flaring torches—John Baptist, who had been director-in-chief of all the shows successively arranged to welcome Don John of Austria, Archduke Matthias, Francis of Alençon, and even William of Orange, into the capital, had prepared a feast of a specially intellectual character for the new governor-general.

The pedant, according to his own account, so soon as the approach of Ernest had been announced, fell straightway into a trance. While he was in that condition, a beautiful female apparition floated before his eyes, and, on being questioned, announced her name to be Moralization. John Baptist begged her to inform him whether it were true, as had been stated, that Jupiter had just sent Mercury to the Netherlands. The phantom, correcting his mistake, observed that the king of gods and men had not sent Hermes but the Archduke Ernestus, beloved of the three Graces, favourite of the nine Muses, and, in addition to these advantages, nephew and brother-in-law of the King of Spain, to the relief of the suffering provinces. The Netherlands, it was true, for their religious infidelity, had justly incurred great disasters and misery; but benignant Jove, who, to the imagination of this excited Fleming, seemed to have been converted to Catholicism while still governing the universe, had now sent them in mercy a deliverer. The archduke would speedily relieve “bleeding Belgica” from her sufferings, bind up her wounds, and annihilate her enemies. The spirit further informed the poet that the forests of the Low Countries—so long infested by brigands, wood-beggars, and malefactors of all kinds—would thenceforth swarm with “nymphs, rabbits, hares, and animals of that nature.”



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A vision of the conquering Ernest, attended by “eight-and-twenty noble and pleasant females, marching two and two, half naked, each holding a torch in one hand and a laurel-wreath in the other,” now swept before the dreamer’s eyes.” He naturally requested the “discreet spirit” to mention the names of this bevy of imperfectly attired ladies thronging so lovingly around the fortunate archduke, and was told that “they were the eight-and-twenty virtues which chiefly characterized his serene Highness.” Prominent in this long list, and they were all faithfully enumerated, were Philosophy, Audacity, Acrimony, Virility, Equity, Piety, Velocity, and Alacrity.” The two last-mentioned qualities could hardly be attributed to the archduke in his decrepit condition, except in an intensely mythological sense. Certainly, they would have been highly useful virtues to him at that moment. The prince who had just taken Gertruydenberg, and was then besieging Groningen, was manifesting his share of audacity, velocity, and other good gifts on even a wider platform than that erected for Ernest by John Baptist Houwaerts; and there was an admirable opportunity for both to develop their respective characteristics for the world’s judgment.

Meantime the impersonation of the gentle and very gouty invalid as Apollo, as Perseus, as the feather-heeled Mercury, was highly applauded by the burghers of Brussels.

And so the dreamer dreamed on, and the discreet nymph continued to discourse, until John Baptist, starting suddenly from his trance beheld that it was all a truth and no vision. Ernest was really about to enter the Netherlands, and with him the millennium. The pedant therefore proceeded to his desk, and straightway composed the very worst poem that had ever been written in any language, even Flemish.

There were thousands of lines in it, and not a line without a god or a goddess.

Mars, Nemesis, and Ate, Pluto, Rhadamanthus, and Minos, the Fates and the Furies, together with Charon, Calumnia, Bellona, and all such objectionable divinities, were requested to disappear for ever from the Low Countries; while in their stead were confidently invoked Jupiter, Apollo, Triptolemus, and last, though not least, Rhetorica.

Enough has been said of this raree-show to weary the reader’s patience, but not more than enough to show the docile and enervated nature of this portion of a people who had lost everything for which men cherish their fatherland, but who could still find relief—after thirty years of horrible civil war in painted pageantry, Latin versification, and the classical dictionary.

Yet there was nothing much more important achieved by the archduke in the brief period for which his administration was destined to endure. Three phenomena chiefly marked his reign, but his own part in the three was rather a passive than an active one—mutiny, assassination, and negotiation—the two last attempted on a considerable scale but ending abortively.



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It is impossible to exaggerate the misery of the obedient provinces at this epoch. The insane attempt of the King of Spain, with such utterly inadequate machinery, to conquer the world has been sufficiently dilated upon. The Spanish and Italian and Walloon soldiers were starving in Brabant and Flanders in order that Spanish gold might be poured into the bottomless pit of the Holy League in France.

The mutiny that had broken forth the preceding year in Artois and Hamault was now continued on a vast scale in Brabant. Never had that national institution—a Spanish mutiny—been more thoroughly organized, more completely carried out in all its details. All that was left of the famous Spanish discipline and military science in this their period of rapid decay, seemed monopolized by the mutineers. Some two thousand choice troops (horse and foot), Italians and Spanish, took possession of two considerable cities, Sichem and Arschot, and ultimately concentrated themselves at Sichem, which they thoroughly fortified. Having chosen their Eletto and other officers they proceeded regularly to business. To the rallying point came disaffected troops of all nations from far and near. Never since the beginning of the great war had there been so extensive a military rebellion, nor one in which so many veteran officers, colonels, captains, and subalterns took part. The army of Philip had at last grown more dangerous to himself than to the Hollanders.

The council at Brussels deliberated anxiously upon the course to be pursued, and it was decided at last to negotiate with instead of attacking them. But it was soon found that the mutineers were as hard to deal with as were the republicans on the other side the border. They refused to hear of anything short of complete payment of the enormous arrears due to them, with thorough guarantees and hostages that any agreement made between themselves and the archduke should be punctually carried out. Meanwhile they ravaged the country far and near, and levied their contributions on towns and villages, up to the very walls of Brussels, and before the very eyes of the viceroy.

Moreover they entered into negotiation with Prince Maurice of Nassau, not offering to enlist under his flag, but asking for protection against the king in exchange for a pledge meanwhile not to serve his cause. At last the archduke plucked up a heart and sent some troops against the rebels, who had constructed two forts on the river Demer near the city of Sichem. In vain Velasco, commander of the expedition, endeavoured to cut off the supplies for these redoubts. The vigour and audacity of the rebel cavalry made the process impossible. Velasco then attempted to storm the lesser stronghold of the two, but was repulsed with the loss of two hundred killed. Among these were many officers, one of whom, Captain Porto Carrero, was a near relative of Fuentes. After a siege, Velasco, who was a marshal of the

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camp of considerable distinction, succeeded in driving the mutineers out of the forts; who, finding their position thus weakened, renewed their negotiations with Maurice. They at last obtained permission from the prince to remain under the protection of Gertruydenberg and Breda until they could ascertain what decision the archduke would take. More they did not ask of Maurice, nor did he require more of them.

The mutiny, thus described in a few lines, had occupied nearly a year, and had done much to paralyze for that period all the royal operations in the Netherlands. In December the rebellious troops marched out of Sichern in perfect order, and came to Langstræet within the territory of the republic.

The archduke now finding himself fairly obliged to treat with them sent an offer of the same terms which had been proposed to mutineers on previous occasions. At first they flatly refused to negotiate at all, but at last, with the permission of Maurice, who conducted himself throughout with scrupulous delicacy, and made no attempts to induce them to violate their allegiance to the king, they received Count Belgioso, the envoy of the archduke. They held out for payment of all their arrears up to the last farthing, and insisted on a hostage of rank until the debt should be discharged. Full forgiveness of their rebellious proceedings was added as a matter of course. Their terms were accepted, and Francisco Padiglia was assigned as a hostage. They then established themselves, according to agreement, at Tirlemont, which they were allowed to fortify at the expense of the province and to hold until the money for their back wages could be scraped together. Meantime they received daily wages and rations from the Government at Brussels, including thirty stivers a day for each horseman, thirteen crowns a day for the Eletto, and ten crowns a day for each counsellor, making in all five hundred crowns a day. And here they remained, living exceedingly at their ease and enjoying a life of leisure for eighteen months, and until long after the death of the archduke, for it was not until the administration of Cardinal Albert that the funds, amounting to three hundred and sixty thousand crowns, could be collected.

These were the chief military exploits of the podagric Perseus in behalf of the Flemish Andromeda.

A very daring adventure was however proposed to the archduke. Philip calmly suggested that an expedition should be rapidly fitted out in Dunkirk, which should cross the channel, ascend the Thames as far as Rochester, and burn the English fleet. "I am informed by persons well acquainted with the English coast," said the king, "that it would be an easy matter for a few quick-sailing vessels to accomplish this. Two or three thousand soldiers might be landed at Rochester who might burn or sink all the unarmed vessels they could find there, and the expedition could return and sail off again before the people of the country could collect in sufficient numbers to do them any damage." The archduke was instructed to consult with Fuentes and Ybarra as to whether this little

matter, thus parenthetically indicated, could be accomplished without too much risk and trouble.



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Certainly it would seem as if the king believed in the audacity, virility, velocity, alacrity, and the rest of the twenty-eight virtues of his governor-general, even more seriously than did John Baptist Houwaerts. The unfortunate archduke would have needed to be, in all earnestness, a mythological demigod to do the work required of him. With the best part of his army formally maintained by him in recognised mutiny, with the great cities of the Netherlands yielding themselves to the republic with hardly an attempt on the part of the royal forces to relieve them, and with the country which he was supposed to govern, the very centre of the obedient provinces, ruined, sacked, eaten up by the soldiers of Spain; villages, farmhouses, gentlemen's castles, churches plundered; the male population exposed to daily butchery, and the women to outrages worse than death; it seemed like the bitterest irony to propose that he should seize that moment to outwit the English and Dutch sea-kings who were perpetually cruising in the channel, and to undertake a "beard-singeing" expedition such as even the dare-devil Drake would hardly have attempted.

Such madcap experiments might perhaps one day, in the distant future, be tried with reasonable success, but hardly at the beck of a Spanish king sitting in his easy chair a thousand miles off, nor indeed by the servants of any king whatever.

The plots of murder arranged in Brussels during this administration were on a far more extensive scale than were the military plans.

The Count of Fuentes, general superintendant of foreign affairs, was especially charged with the department of assassination. This office was no sinecure; for it involved much correspondence, and required great personal attention to minute details. Philip, a consummate artist in this branch of industry, had laid out a good deal of such work which he thought could best be carried out in and from the Netherlands. Especially it was desirable to take off, by poison or otherwise, Henry IV., Queen Elizabeth, Maurice of Nassau, Olden-Barneveld, St. Aldegonde, and other less conspicuous personages.

Henry's physician-in-chief, De la Riviere, was at that time mainly occupied with devising antidotes to poison, which he well knew was offered to his master on frequent occasions, and in the most insidious ways. Andrada, the famous Portuguese poisoner, amongst others is said, under direction of Fuentes and Ybarra, to have attempted his life by a nosegay of roses impregnated with so subtle a powder that its smell alone was relied upon to cause death, and De la Riviere was doing his best to search for a famous Saxon drug, called fable-powder, as a counter-poison. "The Turk alarms us, and well he may," said a diplomatic agent of Henry, "but the Spaniard allows us not to think of the Turk. And what a strange manner is this to exercise one's enmities and vengeance by having recourse to such damnable artifices, after force and arms have not succeeded, and to attack the person of princes by poisonings and assassinations."



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A most elaborate attempt upon the life of Queen Elizabeth early in this year came near being successful. A certain Portuguese Jew, Dr. Lopez, had for some time been her physician-in-ordinary. He had first been received into her service on the recommendation of Don Antonio, the pretender, and had the reputation of great learning and skill. With this man Count Fuentes and Stephen Ybarra, chief of the financial department at Brussels, had a secret understanding. Their chief agent was Emanuel Andrada, who was also in close communication with Bernardino de Mendoza and other leading personages of the Spanish court. Two years previously, Philip, by the hands of Andrada, had sent a very valuable ring of rubies and diamonds as a present to Lopez, and the doctor had bound himself to do any service for the king of Spain that might be required of him. Andrada accordingly wrote to Mendoza that he had gained over this eminent physician, but that as Lopez was poor and laden with debt, a high price would be required for his work. Hereupon Fuentes received orders from the King of Spain to give the Jew all that he could in reason demand, if he would undertake to poison the queen.

It now became necessary to handle the matter with great delicacy, and Fuentes and Ybarra entered accordingly into a correspondence, not with Lopez, but with a certain Ferrara de Gama. These letters were entrusted to one Emanuel Lewis de Tinoco, secretly informed of the plot, for delivery to Ferrara. Fuentes charged Tinoco to cause Ferrara to encourage Lopez to poison her Majesty of England, that they might all have "a merry Easter." Lopez was likewise requested to inform the King of Spain when he thought he could accomplish the task. The doctor ultimately agreed to do the deed for fifty thousand crowns, but as he had daughters and was an affectionate parent, he stipulated for a handsome provision in marriage for those young ladies. The terms were accepted, but Lopez wished to be assured of the money first.

"Having once undertaken the work," said Lord Burghley, if he it were, "he was so greedy to perform it that he would ask Ferrara every day, 'When will the money come? I am ready to do the service if the answer were come out of Spain.'"

But Philip, as has been often seen, was on principle averse to paying for work before it had been done. Some delay occurring, and the secret, thus confided to so many, having floated as it were imperceptibly into the air, Tinoco was arrested on suspicion before he had been able to deliver the letters of Fuentes and Ybarra to Ferrara, for Ferrara, too, had been imprisoned before the arrival of Tinoco. The whole correspondence was discovered, and both Ferrara and Tinoco confessed the plot. Lopez, when first arrested, denied his guilt very stoutly, but being confronted with Ferrara, who told the whole story to his face in presence of the judges, he at last avowed the crime.



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They were all condemned, executed, and quartered at London in the spring of 1594. The queen wished to send a special envoy to the archduke at Brussels, to complain that Secretary of State Cristoval de Moura, Count Fuentes, and Finance Minister Ybarra—all three then immediately about his person—were thus implicated in the plot against her life, to demand their punishment, or else, in case of refusals to convict the king and the archduke as accomplices in the crime. Safe conduct was requested for such an envoy, which was refused by Ernest as an insulting proposition both to his uncle and himself. The queen accordingly sent word to President Richardot by one of her council, that the whole story would be published, and this was accordingly done.

Early in the spring of this same year, a certain Renichon, priest and schoolmaster of Namur, was summoned from his school to a private interview with Count Berlaymont. That nobleman very secretly informed the priest that the King of Spain wished to make use of him in an affair of great importance, and one which would be very profitable to himself. The pair then went together to Brussels, and proceeded straightway to the palace. They were secretly admitted to the apartments of the archduke, but the priest, meaning to follow his conductor into the private chamber, where he pretended to recognize the person of Ernest, was refused admittance. The door was, however, not entirely closed, and he heard, as he declared, the conversation between his Highness and Berlaymont, which was carried on partly in Latin and partly in Spanish. He heard them discussing the question—so he stated—of the recompense to be awarded for the business about to be undertaken, and after a brief conversation, distinctly understood the archduke to say, as the count was approaching the door, “I will satisfy him abundantly and with interest.”

Berlaymont then invited his clerical guest to supper—so ran his statement—and, after that repast was finished, informed him that he was requested by the archduke to kill Prince Maurice of Nassau. For this piece of work he was to receive one hundred Philip-dollars in hand, and fifteen thousand more, which were lying ready for him, so soon as the deed should be done.

The schoolmaster at first objected to the enterprise, but ultimately yielded to the persuasions of the count. He was informed that Maurice was a friendly, familiar gentleman, and that there would be opportunities enough for carrying out the project if he took his time. He was to buy a good pair of pistols and remove to the Hague, where he was to set up a school, and wait for the arrival of his accomplices, of whom there were six. Berlaymont then caused to be summoned and introduced to the pedagogue a man whom he described as one of the six. The new comer, hearing that Renichon had agreed to the propositions made to him, hailed him cordially as comrade and promised to follow him very soon into Holland. Berlaymont then observed that there were several personages to be made away with, besides Prince Maurice—especially Barneveld, and St. Aldegonde and that the six assassins had, since the time of the Duke of Parma, been kept in the pay of the King of Spain as nobles, to be employed as occasion should serve.



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His new comrade accompanied Renichon to the canal boat, conversing by the way, and informed him that they were both to be sent to Leyden in order to entice away and murder the young brother of Maurice, Frederic Henry, then at school at that place, even as Philip William, eldest of all the brothers, had been kidnapped five-and-twenty years before from the same town.

Renichon then disguised himself as a soldier, proceeded to Antwerp, where he called himself Michael de Triviere, and thence made his way to Breda, provided with letters from Berlaymont. He was, however, arrested on suspicion not long after his arrival there, and upon trial the whole plot was discovered. Having unsuccessfully attempted to hang himself, he subsequently, without torture, made a full and minute confession, and was executed on the 3rd June, 1594.

Later in the year, one Pierre du Four, who had been a soldier both in the States and the French service, was engaged by General La Motte and Counsellor Assonleville to attempt the assassination of Prince Maurice. La Motte took the man to the palace, and pretended at least to introduce him to the chamber of the archduke, who was said to be lying ill in bed. Du Four was advised to enrol himself in the body-guard at the Hague, and to seek an opportunity when the prince went hunting, or was mounting his horse, or was coming from church, or at some such unguarded moment, to take a shot at him. "Will you do what I ask," demanded from the bed the voice of him who was said to be Ernest, "will you kill this tyrant?"—"I will," replied the soldier. "Then my son," was the parting benediction of the supposed archduke, "you will go straight to paradise."

Afterwards he received good advice from Assonleville, and was assured that if he would come and hear a mass in the royal chapel next morning, that religious ceremony would make him invisible when he should make his attempt on the life of Maurice, and while he should be effecting his escape. The poor wretch accordingly came next morning to chapel, where this miraculous mass was duly performed, and he then received a certain portion of his promised reward in ready money. He was also especially charged, in case he should be arrested, not to make a confession—as had been done by those previously employed in such work—as all complicity with him on part of his employers would certainly be denied.

The miserable dupe was arrested, convicted, executed; and of course the denial was duly made on the part of the archduke, La Motte, and Assonleville. It was also announced, on behalf of Ernest, that some one else, fraudulently impersonating his Highness, had lain in the bed to which the culprit had been taken, and every one must hope that the statement was a true one.

Enough has been given to show the peculiar school of statesmanship according to the precepts of which the internal concerns and foreign affairs of the obedient Netherlands were now administered. Poison and pistols in the hands of obscure priests and deserters were relied on to bring about great political triumphs, while the mutinous royal

armies, entrenched and defiant, were extorting capitulations from their own generals and their own sovereign upon his own soil.



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Such a record as this seems rather like the exaggeration of a diseased fancy, seeking to pander to a corrupt public taste which feeds greedily upon horrors; but, unfortunately, it is derived from the register of high courts of justice, from diplomatic correspondence, and from the confessions, without torture or hope of free pardon, of criminals. For a crowned king and his high functionaries and generals to devote so much of their time, their energies, and their money to the murder of brother and sister sovereigns, and other illustrious personages, was not to make after ages in love with the monarchic and aristocratic system, at least as thus administered. Popular governments may be deficient in polish, but a system resting for its chief support upon bribery and murder cannot be considered lovely by any healthy mind. And this is one of the lessons to be derived from the history of Philip II. and of the Holy League.

But besides mutiny and assassination there were also some feeble attempts at negotiation to characterize the Ernestian epoch at Brussels. The subject hardly needs more than a passing allusion.

Two Flemish juris-consults, Otto Hertius and Jerome Comans, offered their services to the archduke in the peacemaking department. Ernest accepted the proposition,—although it was strongly opposed by Fuentes, who relied upon the more practical agency of Dr. Lopez, Andrada, Renichon, and the rest—and the peace-makers accordingly made their appearance at the Hague, under safe conduct, and provided with very conciliatory letters from his Highness to the States-General. In all ages and under all circumstances it is safe to enlarge, with whatever eloquence may be at command, upon the blessings of peace and upon the horrors of war; for the appeal is not difficult to make, and a response is certain in almost every human breast. But it is another matter to descend from the general to the particular, and to demonstrate how the desirable may be attained and the horrible averted. The letters of Ernest were full of benignity and affection, breathing a most ardent desire that the miserable war, now a quarter of a century old, should be then and there terminated. But not one atom of concession was offered, no whisper breathed that the republic, if it should choose to lay down its victorious arms, and renounce its dearly gained independence, should share any different fate from that under which it saw the obedient provinces gasping before its eyes. To renounce religious and political liberty and self-government, and to submit unconditionally to the authority of Philip II. as administered by Ernest and Fuentes, was hardly to be expected as the result of the three years' campaigns of Maurice of Nassau.

The two doctors of law laid the affectionate common-places of the archduke before the States-General, each of them making, moreover, a long and flowery oration in which the same protestations of good will and hopes of future good-fellowship were distended to formidable dimensions by much windy rhetoric. The accusations which had been made against the Government of Brussels of complicity in certain projects of assassination were repelled with virtuous indignation.



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The answer of the States-General was wrathful and decided. They informed the commissioners that they had taken up arms for a good cause and meant to retain them in their hands. They expressed their thanks for the expressions of good will which had been offered, but avowed their right to complain before God and the world of those who under pretext of peace were attempting to shed the innocent blood of Christians, and to procure the ruin and destruction of the Netherlands. To this end the state-council of Spain was more than ever devoted, being guilty of the most cruel and infamous proceedings and projects. They threw out a rapid and stinging summary of their wrongs; and denounced with scorn the various hollow attempts at negotiation during the preceding twenty-five years. Coming down to the famous years 1587 and 1588, they alluded in vehement terms to the fraudulent peace propositions which had been thrown as a veil over the Spanish invasion of England and the Armada; and they glanced at the mediation-projects of the emperor in 1591 at the desire of Spain, while armies were moving in force from Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands to crush the King of France, in order that Philip might establish his tyranny over all kings, princes, provinces, and republics. That the Spanish Government was secretly dealing with the emperor and other German potentates for the extension of his universal empire appeared from intercepted letters of the king—copies of which were communicated—from which it was sufficiently plain that the purpose of his Majesty was not to bestow peace and tranquillity upon the Netherlands. The names of Fuentes, Clemente, Ybarra, were sufficient in themselves to destroy any such illusion. They spoke in blunt terms of the attempt of Dr. Lopez to poison Queen Elizabeth, at the instigation of Count Fuentes for fifty thousand crowns to be paid by the King of Spain: they charged upon the same Fuentes and upon Ybarra that they had employed the same Andrada to murder the King of France with a nosegay of roses; and they alluded further to the revelations of Michael Renichon, who was to murder Maurice of Nassau and kidnap Frederic William, even as their father and brother had been already murdered and kidnapped.

For such reasons the archduke might understand by what persons and what means the good people of the Netherlands were deceived, and how difficult it was for the States to forget such lessons, or to imagine anything honest in the present propositions.

The States declared themselves, on the contrary, more called upon than ever before to be upon the watch against the stealthy proceedings of the Spanish council of state—bearing in mind the late execrable attempts at assassination, and the open war which was still carried on against the King of France.

And although it was said that his Highness was displeased with such murderous and hostile proceedings, still it was necessary for the States to beware of the nefarious projects of the King of Spain and his council.



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After the conversion of Henry IV. to the Roman Church had been duly accomplished that monarch had sent a secret envoy to Spain. The mission of this agent—De Varenne by name—excited intense anxiety and suspicion in England and Holland and among the Protestants of France and Germany. It was believed that Henry had not only made a proposition of a separate peace with Philip, but that he had formally but mysteriously demanded the hand of the Infanta in marriage. Such a catastrophe as this seemed to the heated imaginations of the great body of Calvinists throughout Europe, who had so faithfully supported the King of Navarre up to the moment of his great apostasy, the most cruel and deadly treachery of all. That the princess with the many suitors should come to reign over France after all—not as the bride of her own father, not as the queen-consort of Ernest the Habsburger or of Guise the Lorrainer, but as the lawful wife of Henry the Huguenot—seemed almost too astounding for belief, even amid the chances and changes of that astonishing epoch. Yet Duplessis Mornay avowed that the project was entertained, and that he had it from the very lips of the secret envoy who was to negotiate the marriage. “La Varenne is on his way to Spain,” wrote Duplessis to the Duke of Bouillon, “in company with a gentleman of Don Bernardino de Mendoza, who brought the first overtures. He is to bring back the portrait of the Infanta. ’Tis said that the marriage is to be on condition that the Queen and the Netherlands are comprised in the peace, but you know that this cannot be satisfactorily arranged for those two parties. All this was once guess-work, but is now history.”

That eminent diplomatist and soldier Mendoza had already on his return from France given the King of Spain to understand that there were no hopes of his obtaining the French crown either for himself or for his daughter, that all the money lavished on the chiefs of the League was thrown away, and that all their promises were idle wind. Mendoza in consequence had fallen into contempt at court, but Philip, observing apparently that there might have been something correct in his statements, had recently recalled him, and, notwithstanding his blindness and other infirmities, was disposed to make use of him in secret negotiations. Mendoza had accordingly sent a confidential agent to Henry IV. offering his good offices, now that the king had returned to the bosom of the Church.

This individual, whose name was Nunez, was admitted by De Bethune (afterwards the famous Due de Sully) to the presence of the king, but De Bethune, believing it probable that the Spaniard had been sent to assassinate Henry, held both the hands of the emissary during the whole interview, besides subjecting him to a strict personal visitation beforehand. Nunez stated that he was authorized to propose to his Majesty a marriage with the Infanta Clara Isabella, and Henry, much to the discontent of De Bethune, listened eagerly to the suggestion, and promised to send a secret agent to Spain to confer on the subject with Mendoza.

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The choice he made of La Varenne, whose real name was Guillaume Fouquet, for this mission was still more offensive to De Bethune. Fouquet had originally been a cook in the service of Madame Catherine, and was famous for his talent for larding poultry, but he had subsequently entered the household of Henry, where he had been employed in the most degrading service which one man can render to another.

[“La Varenne,” said Madame Catherine on one occasion “tu as plus gagne ti porter les poulets de men frere, qu’a piquer les miens.” *Memoires de Sully*, Liv. vi. p. 296, note 6. He accumulated a large fortune in these dignified pursuits—having, according to Winwood, landed estates to the annual amount of sixty thousand francs a-year—and gave large dowries to his daughters, whom he married into noblest families; “which is the more remarkable,” adds Winwood, “considering the services wherein he is employed about the king, which is to be the Mezzano for his loves; the place from whence he came, which is out of the kitchen of Madame the king’s sister.”— *Memorials*, i. 380.]

On his appointment to this office of secret diplomacy he assumed all the airs of an ambassador, while Henry took great pains to contradict the reports which were spread as to the true nature of this mission to Spain.

Duplessis was, in truth, not very far wrong in his conjectures, but, as might be supposed, Henry was most anxious to conceal these secret negotiations with his Catholic Majesty from the Huguenot chiefs whom he had so recently deserted. “This is all done without the knowledge of the Duke of Bouillon,” said Calvaert, “or at least under a very close disguise, as he, himself keenly feels and confesses to me.” The envoy of the republic, as well as the leaders of the Protestant party in France, were resolved if possible to break off these dark and dangerous intrigues, the nature of which they so shrewdly suspected, and to substitute for them an open rupture of Henry with the King of Spain, and a formal declaration of war against him. None of the diplomatists or political personages engaged in these great affairs, in which the whole world was so deeply interested, manifested more sagacity and insight on this occasion than did the Dutch statesmen. We have seen that even Sir Edward Stafford was deceived up to a very late moment, as to the rumoured intentions of Henry to enter the Catholic Church. Envoy Edmonds was now equally and completely in the dark as to the mission of Varenne, and informed his Government that the only result of it was that the secret agent to Spain was favoured, through the kindness of Mendoza, with a distant view of Philip II. with his son and daughter at their devotions in the chapel of the Escorial. This was the tale generally recounted and believed after the agent’s return from Spain, so that Varenne was somewhat laughed at as having gone to Spain on a fool’s errand, and as having got nothing



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from Mendoza but a disavowal of his former propositions. But the shrewd Calvaert, who had entertained familiar relations with La Varenne, received from that personage after his return a very different account of his excursion to the Escorial from the one generally circulated. "Coming from Monceaux to Paris in his company," wrote Calvaert in a secret despatch to the States, "I had the whole story from him. The chief part of his negotiations with Don Bernardino de Mendoza was that if his Majesty (the French king) would abandon the Queen of England and your Highnesses (the States of the Netherlands), there were no conditions that would be refused the king, including the hand of the Infanta, together with a good recompense for the kingdom of Navarre. La Varenne maintained that the King of Spain had caused these negotiations to be entered upon at this time with him in the certain hope and intention of a definite conclusion, alleging to me many pertinent reasons, and among others that he, having been lodged at Madrid, through the adroitness of Don Bernardino, among all the agents of the League, and hearing all their secrets and negotiations, had never been discovered, but had always been supposed to be one of the League himself. He said also that he was well assured that the Infanta in her heart had an affection for the French king, and notwithstanding any resolutions that might be taken (to which I referred, meaning the projects for bestowing her on the house of Austria) that she with her father's consent or in case of his death would not fail to carry out this marriage. You may from all this, even out of the proposal for compensation for the kingdom of Navarre (of which his Majesty also let out something to me inadvertently); collect the reasons why such feeble progress is made in so great an occasion as now presents itself for a declaration of war and an open alliance with your Highnesses. I shall not fail to watch these events, even in case of the progress of the said resolutions, notwithstanding the effects of which it is my opinion that this secret intrigue is not to be abandoned. To this end, besides the good intelligence which one gets by means of good friends, a continual and agreeable presentation of oneself to his Majesty, in order to see and hear everything, is necessary."

Certainly, here were reasons more than sufficient why Henry should be making but feeble preparations for open war in alliance with England and the republic against Philip, as such a step was hardly compatible with the abandonment of England and the republic and the espousal of Philip's daughter—projects which Henry's commissioner had just been discussing with Philip's agent at Madrid and the Escorial.

Truly it was well for the republican envoy to watch events as closely as possible, to make the most of intelligence from his good friends, and to present himself as frequently and as agreeably as possible to his Majesty, that he might hear and see everything. There was much to see and to hear, and it needed adroitness and courage, not to slip or stumble in such dark ways where the very ground seemed often to be sliding from beneath the feet.



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To avoid the catastrophe of an alliance between Henry, Philip, and the Pope against Holland and England, it was a pressing necessity for Holland and England to force Henry into open war against Philip. To this end the Dutch statesmen were bending all their energies. Meantime Elizabeth regarded the campaign in Artois and Hainault with little favour.

As he took leave on departing for France, La Varenne had requested Mendoza to write to King Henry, but the Spaniard excused himself— although professing the warmest friendship for his Majesty—on the ground of the impossibility of addressing him correctly. “If I call him here King of Navarre, I might as well put my head on the block at once,” he observed; “if I call him King of France, my master has not yet recognized him as such; if I call him anything else, he will himself be offended.”

And the vision of Philip in black on his knees, with his children about him, and a rapier at his side, passed with the contemporary world as the only phenomenon of this famous secret mission.

But Henry, besides this demonstration towards Spain, lost no time in despatching a special minister to the republic and to England, who was instructed to make the most profuse, elaborate, and conciliatory explanations as to his recent conversion and as to his future intentions. Never would he make peace, he said, with Spain without the full consent of the States and of England; the dearest object of his heart in making his peace with Rome having been to restore peace to his own distracted realm, to bring all Christians into one brotherhood, and to make a united attack upon the grand Turk—a vision which the cheerful monarch hardly intended should ever go beyond the ivory gate of dreams, but which furnished substance enough for several well-rounded periods in the orations of De Morlans.

That diplomatist, after making the strongest representations to Queen Elizabeth as to the faithful friendship of his master, and the necessity he was under of pecuniary and military assistance, had received generous promises of aid both in men and money— three thousand men besides the troops actually serving in Brittany—from that sagacious sovereign, notwithstanding the vehement language in which she had rebuked her royal brother’s apostasy. He now came for the same purpose to the Hague, where he made very eloquent harangues to the States-General, acknowledging that the republic had ever been the most upright, perfect, and undisguised friend to his master and to France in their darkest days and deepest affliction; that she had loved the king and kingdom for themselves, not merely hanging on to their prosperity, but, on the contrary, doing her best to produce that prosperity by her contributions in soldiers, ships, and subsidies. “The king,” said De Morlans, “is deeply grieved that he can prove his gratitude only in words for so many benefits conferred, which are absolutely without example, but he has commissioned me to declare that if God should ever give him the occasion, he will prove how highly he places your friendship.”



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The envoy assured the States that all fears entertained by those of the reformed religion on account of the conversion of his Majesty were groundless. Nothing was farther from the king's thoughts than to injure those noble spirits with whom his soul had lived so long, and whom he so much loved and honoured. No man knew better than the king did, the character of those who professed the Religion, their virtue, valour, resolution, and patience in adversity. Their numbers had increased in war, their virtues had been purified by affliction, they had never changed their position, whether battles had been won or lost. Should ever an attempt be made to take up arms against them within his realms, and should there be but five hundred of them against ten thousand, the king, remembering their faithful and ancient services, would leave the greater number in order to die at the head of his old friends. He was determined that they should participate in all the honours of the kingdom, and with regard to a peace with Spain, he would have as much care for the interests of the United Provinces as for his own. But a peace was impossible with that monarch, whose object was to maintain his own realms in peace while he kept France in perpetual revolt against the king whom God had given her. The King of Spain had trembled at Henry's cradle, at his youth, at the bloom of his manhood, and knew that he had inflicted too much injury upon him ever to be on friendly terms with him. The envoy was instructed to say that his master never expected to be in amity with one who had ruined his house confiscated his property, and caused so much misery to France; and he earnestly hoped—without presuming to dictate—that the States-General would in this critical emergency manifest their generosity. If the king were not assisted now, both king and kingdom would perish. If he were assisted, the succour would bear double fruit.

The sentiments expressed on the part of Henry towards his faithful subjects of the Religion, the heretic Queen of England, and the stout Dutch Calvinists who had so long stood by him, were most noble. It was pity that, at the same moment, he was proposing to espouse the Infanta, and to publish the Council of Trent.

The reply of the States-General to these propositions of the French envoy was favourable, and it was agreed that a force of three thousand foot and five hundred horse should be sent to the assistance of the king. Moreover, the state-paper drawn up on this occasion was conceived with so much sagacity and expressed with so much eloquence, as particularly to charm the English queen when it was communicated to her Majesty. She protested very loudly and vehemently to Noel de Caron, envoy from the provinces at London, that this response on the part of his Government to De Morlans was one of the wisest documents that she had ever seen. "In all their actions," said she, "the States-General show their sagacity, and indeed, it is the wisest Government ever known among republics. I would show you," she added to the gentlemen around her, "the whole of the paper if it were this moment at hand."

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After some delays, it was agreed between the French Government and that of the United Provinces, that the king should divide his army into three parts, and renew the military operations against Spain with the expiration of the truce at the end of the year (1593).

One body, composed of the English contingent, together with three thousand French horse, three thousand Swiss, and four thousand French harquebus-men, were to be under his own immediate command, and were to act against the enemy wherever it should appear to his Majesty most advantageous. A second, army was to expel the rebels and their foreign allies from Normandy and reduce Rouen to obedience. A third was to make a campaign in the provinces of Artois and Hainault, under the Duke of Bouillon (more commonly called the Viscount Turenne), in conjunction with the forces to be supplied by the republic. "Any treaty of peace on our part with the King of Spain," said the States-General, "is our certain ruin. This is an axiom. That monarch's object is to incorporate into his own realms not only all the states and possessions of neighbouring kings, principalities, and powers, but also all Christendom, aye, the whole world, were it possible. We joyfully concur then in your Majesty's resolution to carry on the war in Artois and Hainault, and agree to your suggestion of diversions on our part by sieges and succour by contingents."

Balagny, meantime, who had so long led an independent existence at Cambray, now agreed to recognise Henry's authority, in consideration of sixty-seven thousand crowns yearly pension and the dignity of Marshal of France.

Towards the end of the year 1594, Buzanval, the regular French envoy at the Hague, began to insist more warmly than seemed becoming that the campaign in Artois and Hainault—so often the base of military operations on the part of Spain against France—should begin. Further achievements on the part of Maurice after the fall of Groningen were therefore renounced for that year, and his troops went into garrison and winter-quarters. The States-General, who had also been sending supplies, troops, and ships to Brittany to assist the king, now, after soundly rebuking Buzanval for his intemperate language, entrusted their contingent for the proposed frontier campaign to Count Philip Nassau, who accordingly took the field toward the end of the year at the head of twenty-eight companies of foot and five squadrons of cavalry. He made his junction with Turenne-Bouillon, but the duke, although provided with a tremendous proclamation, was but indifferently supplied with troops. The German levies, long-expected, were slow in moving, and on the whole it seemed that the operations might have been continued by Maurice with more effect, according to his original plan, than in this rather desultory fashion. The late winter campaign on the border was feeble and a failure.



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The bonds of alliance, however, were becoming very close between Henry and the republic. Despite the change in religion on the part of the king, and the pangs which it had occasioned in the hearts of leading Netherlanders, there was still the traditional attraction between France and the States, which had been so remarkably manifested during the administration of William the Silent. The republic was more restive than ever under the imperious and exacting friendship of Elizabeth, and, feeling more and more its own strength, was making itself more and more liable to the charge of ingratitude; so constantly hurled in its face by the queen. And Henry, now that he felt himself really king of France, was not slow to manifest a similar ingratitude or an equal love of independence. Both monarch and republic, chafing under the protection of Elizabeth, were drawn into so close a union as to excite her anger and jealousy—sentiments which in succeeding years were to become yet more apparent. And now; while Henry still retained the chivalrous and flowery phraseology, so sweet to her ears, in his personal communications to the queen, his ministers were in the habit of using much plainer language. “Mr. de Sancy said to me,” wrote the Netherland minister in France, Calvaert, “that his Majesty and your Highnesses (the States-General) must without long delay conclude an alliance offensive and defensive. In regard to England, which perhaps might look askance at this matter, he told me it would be invited also by his Majesty into the same alliance; but if, according to custom, it shilly-shallied, and without coming to deeds or to succour should put him off with words, he should in that case proceed with our alliance without England, not doubting that many other potentates in Italy and Germany would join in it likewise. He said too, that he, the day before the departure of the English ambassador, had said these words to him in the presence of his Majesty; namely, that England had entertained his Majesty sixteen months long with far-fetched and often-repeated questions and discontents, that one had submitted to this sort of thing so long as his Majesty was only king of Mantes, Dieppe, and Louviers, but that his Majesty being now king of Paris would be no longer a servant of those who should advise him to suffer it any longer or accept it as good payment; that England must treat his Majesty according to his quality, and with deeds, not words. He added that the ambassador had very anxiously made answer to these words, and had promised that when he got back to England he would so arrange that his Majesty should be fully satisfied, insisting to the last on the alliance then proposed.”

In Germany, meanwhile, there was much protocolling, and more hard drinking, at the Diet of Ratisbon. The Protestant princes did little for their cause against the new designs of Spain and the moribund League, while the Catholics did less to assist Philip. In truth, the holy Roman Empire, threatened with a Turkish invasion, had neither power nor inclination to help the new universal empire of the west into existence. So the princes and grandees of Germany, while Amurath was knocking at the imperial gates, busied themselves with banquetting and other diplomatic work, but sent few reiters either to the east or west.

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Philip's envoys were indignant at the apathy displayed towards the great Catholic cause, and felt humbled at the imbecility exhibited by Spain in its efforts against the Netherlands and France. San Clemente, who was attending the Diet at Ratisbon, was shocked at the scenes he witnessed. "In less than three months," said that temperate Spaniard, "they have drunk more than five million florins' worth of wine, at a time when the Turk has invaded the frontiers of Germany; and among those who have done the most of this consumption of wine, there is not one who is going to give any assistance on the frontier. In consequence of these disorders my purse is drained so low, that unless the king helps me I am ruined. You must tell our master that the reputation of his grandeur and strength has never been so low as it is now in Germany. The events in France and those which followed in the Netherlands have thrown such impediments in the negotiations here, that not only our enemies make sport of Marquis Havre and myself, but even our friends—who are very few—dare not go to public feasts, weddings, and dinners, because they are obliged to apologize for us."

Truly the world-empire was beginning to crumble. "The emperor has been desiring twenty times," continued the envoy, "to get back to Prague from the Diet, but the people hold him fast like a steer. As I think over all that passes, I lose all judgment, for I have no money, nor influence, nor reputation. Meantime, I see this rump of an empire keeping itself with difficulty upon its legs. 'Tis full of wrangling and discord about religion, and yet there is the Turk with two hundred thousand men besieging a place forty miles from Vienna, which is the last outpost. God grant it may last!"

Such was the aspect of the Christian world at the close of the year 1594

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