

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1603-04 eBook

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1603-04 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. 76

History of the United Netherlands, 1603-1604

CHAPTER XLI.

Death of Queen Elizabeth—Condition of Spain—Legations to James I. —Union of England and Scotland—Characteristics of the new monarch —The English Court and Government—Piratical practices of the English—Audience of the States' envoy with king James—Queen Elizabeth's scheme for remodelling Europe—Ambassador extraordinary from Henry IV. to James—De Rosny's strictures on the English people—Private interview of De Rosny with the States' envoy—De Rosny's audience of the king —Objects of his mission—Insinuations of the Duke of Northumberland—Invitation of the embassy to Greenwich—Promise of James to protect the Netherlands against Spain—Misgivings of Barneveld—Conference at Arundel House—Its unsatisfactory termination —Contempt of De Rosny for the English counsellors—Political aspect of Europe—De

Rosny's disclosure to the king of the secret object of his mission—Agreement of James to the proposals of De Rosny—Ratification of the treaty of alliance— Return of De Rosny and suite to France—Arrival of the Spanish ambassador.

On the 24th of March, 1603, Queen Elizabeth died at Richmond, having nearly completed her seventieth year. The two halves of the little island of Britain were at last politically adjoined to each other by the personal union of the two crowns.

A foreigner, son of the woman executed by Elizabeth, succeeded to Elizabeth's throne. It was most natural that the Dutch republic and the French king, the archdukes and his Catholic Majesty, should be filled with anxiety as to the probable effect of this change of individuals upon the fortunes of the war.

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For this Dutch war of independence was the one absorbing and controlling interest in Christendom. Upon that vast, central, and, as men thought, baleful constellation the fates of humanity, were dependent. Around it lesser political events were forced to gravitate, and, in accordance to their relation to it, were bright or obscure. It was inevitable that those whose vocation it was to ponder the aspects of the political firmament, the sages and high-priests who assumed to direct human action and to foretell human destiny, should now be more than ever perplexed.

Spain, since the accession of Philip III. to his father's throne, although rapidly declining in vital energy, had not yet disclosed its decrepitude to the world. Its boundless ambition survived as a political tradition rather than a real passion, while contemporaries still trembled at the vision of universal monarchy in which the successor of Charlemagne and of Charles V. was supposed to indulge.

Meantime, no feebler nor more insignificant mortal existed on earth than this dreaded sovereign.

Scarcely a hairdresser or lemonade-dealer in all Spain was less cognizant of the political affairs of the kingdom than was its monarch, for Philip's first care upon assuming the crown was virtually to abdicate in favour of the man soon afterwards known as the Duke of Lerma.

It is therefore only by courtesy and for convenience that history recognizes his existence at all, as surely no human being in the reign of Philip III. requires less mention than Philip III. himself.

I reserve for a subsequent chapter such rapid glances at the interior condition of that kingdom with which it seemed the destiny of the Dutch republic to be perpetually at war, as may be necessary to illustrate the leading characteristics of the third Philip's reign.

Meantime, as the great queen was no more, who was always too sagacious to doubt that the Dutch cause was her own—however disposed she might be to browbeat the Dutchmen—it seemed possible to Spain that the republic might at last be deprived of its only remaining ally. Tassis was despatched as chief of a legation, precursory to a more stately embassy to be confided to the Duke of Frias. The archdukes sent the prince of Arenberg, while from the United States came young Henry of Nassau, associated with John of Olden-Barneveld, Falk, Brederode, and other prominent statesmen of the commonwealth. Ministers from Denmark and Sweden, from the palatinate and from numerous other powers, small and great, were also collected to greet the rising sun in united Britain, while the, awkward Scotchman, who was now called upon to play that prominent part in the world's tragi-comedy which had been so long and so majestically sustained by the "Virgin Queen," already began to tremble at the plaudits and the bustle which announced how much was expected of the new performer.

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There was indeed a new sovereign upon the throne. That most regal spirit which had well expressed so many of the highest characteristics of the nation had fled. Mankind, has long been familiar with the dark, closing hours of the illustrious reign. The great queen, moody, despairing, dying, wrapt in profoundest thought, with eyes fixed upon the ground or already gazing into infinity, was besought by the counsellors around her to name the man to whom she chose that the crown should devolve.

“Not to a Rough,” said Elizabeth, sententiously and grimly.

When the King of France was named, she shook her head. When Philip III. was suggested, she made a still more significant sign of dissent. When the King of Scots was mentioned, she nodded her approval, and again relapsed into silent meditation.

She died, and James was King of Great Britain and Ireland. Cecil had become his prime minister long before the queen’s eyes were closed. The hard-featured, rickety, fidgety, shambling, learned, most preposterous Scotchman hastened to take possession of the throne. Never—could there have been a more unfit place or unfit hour for such a man.

England, although so small in dimensions, so meager in population, so deficient, compared to the leading nations of Europe, in material and financial strength, had already her great future swelling in her heart. Intellectually and morally she was taking the lead among the nations. Even at that day she had produced much which neither she herself nor any other nation seemed destined to surpass.

Yet this most redoubtable folk only numbered about three millions, one-tenth of them inhabiting London. With the Scots and Irish added they amounted to less than five millions of souls, hardly a third as many as the homogeneous and martial people of that dangerous neighbour France.

Ireland was always rebellious; a mere conquered province, hating her tyrant England’s laws, religion, and people; loving Spain, and believing herself closely allied by blood as well as sympathy to that most Catholic land.

Scotland, on the accession of James, hastened to take possession of England. Never in history had two races detested each other more fervently. The leeches and locusts of the north, as they were universally designated in England, would soon have been swept forth from the country, or have left it of their own accord, had not the king employed all that he had of royal authority or of eloquent persuasion to retain them on the soil. Of union, save the personal union of the sceptre, there was no thought. As in Ireland there was hatred to England and adoration for Spain; so in Scotland, France was beloved quite as much as England was abhorred. Who could have foretold, or even hoped, that atoms so mutually repulsive would ever have coalesced into a sympathetic and indissoluble whole?

Even the virtues of James were his worst enemies. As generous as the day, he gave away with reckless profusion anything and everything that he could lay his hands upon. It was soon to appear that the great queen's most unlovely characteristic, her avarice; was a more blessed quality to the nation she ruled than the ridiculous prodigality of James.

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Two thousand gowns, of the most, expensive material, adorned with gold, pearls, and other bravery—for Elizabeth was very generous to herself— were found in the queen's wardrobe, after death. These magnificent and costly robes, not one of which had she vouchsafed to bestow upon or to bequeath to any of her ladies of honour, were now presented by her successor to a needy Scotch lord, who certainly did not intend to adorn his own person therewith. "The hat was ever held out," said a splenetic observer, "and it was filled in overflowing measure by the new monarch."

In a very short period he had given away—mainly to Scotchmen—at least two millions of crowns, in various articles of personal property. Yet England was very poor.

The empire, if so it could be called, hardly boasted a regular revenue of more than two millions of dollars a year; less than that of a fortunate individual or two, in our own epoch, both in Europe and America; and not one-fifth part of the contemporary income of France. The hundred thousand dollars of Scotland's annual budget did not suffice to pay its expenses, and Ireland was a constant charge upon the imperial exchequer.

It is astounding, however, to reflect upon the pomp, extravagance, and inordinate pride which characterized the government and the court.

The expenses of James's household were at least five hundred thousand crowns, or about one quarter of the whole revenue of the empire. Henry IV., with all his extravagance, did not spend more than one-tenth of the public income of France upon himself and his court.

Certainly if England were destined to grow great it would be in despite of its new monarch. Hating the People, most intolerant in religion, believing intensely in royal prerogative, thoroughly convinced of his regal as well as his personal infallibility, loathing that inductive method of thought which was already leading the English nation so proudly on the road of intellectual advancement, shrinking from the love of free inquiry, of free action, of daring adventure, which was to be the real informing spirit of the great British nation; abhorring the Puritans— that is to say, one-third of his subjects—in whose harsh, but lofty. nature he felt instinctively that popular freedom was enfolded—even as the overshadowing tree in the rigid husk—and sending them forth into the far distant wilderness to wrestle with wild beasts and with savages more ferocious than beasts; fearing and hating the Catholics as the sworn enemies of his realm; his race, and himself, trampling on them as much as he dared, forcing them into hypocrisy to save themselves from persecution or at least pecuniary ruin—if they would worship God according to their conscience; at deadly feud, therefore, on religious grounds, with much more than half his subjects—Puritans or Papists—and yet himself a Puritan in dogma and a Papist in Church government, if only the king could be pope; not knowing,

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indeed, whether a Puritan, or a Jesuit whom he called a Papist-Puritan, should be deemed the more disgusting or dangerous animal; already preparing for his unfortunate successor a path to the scaffold by employing all the pedantry, both theological and philosophical at his command to bring parliaments into contempt, and to place the royal prerogative on a level with Divinity; at the head of a most martial, dauntless, and practical nation, trembling, with unfortunate physical timidity, at the sight of a drawn sword; ever scribbling or haranguing in Latin, French, or broad Scotch, when the world was arming, it must always be a special wonder that one who might have been a respectable; even a useful, pedagogue, should by the caprice of destiny have been permitted, exactly at that epoch to be one of the most contemptible and mischievous of kings.

But he had a most effective and energetic minister. Even as in Spain and in France at the same period, the administration of government was essentially in-one pair of hands.

Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, ever since the termination of the splendid triumvirate of his father and Walsingham, had been in reality supreme. The proud and terrible hunchback, who never forgave, nor forgot to destroy, his enemies, had now triumphed over the last passion of the doting queen. Essex had gone to perdition.

Son of the great minister who had brought the mother of James to the scaffold, Salisbury had already extorted forgiveness for that execution from the feeble king. Before Elizabeth was in her grave, he was already as much the favourite of her successor as of herself, governing Scotland as well as England, and being Prime Minister of Great Britain before Great Britain existed.

Lord High Treasurer and First Secretary of State, he was now all in all in the council. The other great lords, highborn and highly titled as they were and served at their banquets by hosts of lackeys on their knees—Nottinghams, Northamptons, Suffolks—were, after all, ciphers or at best, mere pensioners of Spain. For all the venality of Europe was not confined to the Continent. Spain spent at least one hundred and fifty thousand crowns annually among the leading courtiers of James while his wife, Anne of Denmark, a Papist at heart, whose private boudoir was filled with pictures and images of the Madonna and the saints, had already received one hundred thousand dollars in solid cash from the Spanish court, besides much jewelry, and other valuable things. To negotiate with Government in England was to bribe, even as at Paris or Madrid. Gold was the only passkey to justice, to preferment, or to power.

Yet the foreign subsidies to the English court were, after all, of but little avail at that epoch. No man had influence but Cecil, and he was too proud, too rich, too powerful to be bribed. Alone with clean fingers among courtiers and ministers, he had, however, accumulated a larger fortune than any. His annual income was estimated at two

hundred thousand crowns, and he had a vast floating capital, always well employed. Among other investments, he had placed half a million on interest in Holland,' and it was to be expected, therefore, that he should favour the cause of the republic, rebellious and upstart though it were.

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The pigmy, as the late queen had been fond of nicknaming him, was the only giant in the Government. Those crooked shoulders held up, without flinching, the whole burden of the State. Pale, handsome, anxious, suffering, and intellectual of visage, with his indomitable spirit, ready eloquence, and nervous energy, he easily asserted supremacy over all the intriguers, foreign and domestic, the stipendiaries, the generals, the admirals, the politicians, at court, as well as over the Scotch Solomon who sat on the throne.

But most certainly, it was for the public good of Britain, that Europe should be pacified. It is very true that the piratical interest would suffer, and this was a very considerable and influential branch of business. So long as war existed anywhere, the corsairs of England sailed with the utmost effrontery from English ports, to prey upon the commerce of friend and foe alike. After a career of successful plunder, it was not difficult for the rovers to return to their native land, and, with the proceeds of their industry, to buy themselves positions of importance, both social and political. It was not the custom to consider too curiously the source of the wealth. If it was sufficient to dazzle the eyes of the vulgar, it was pretty certain to prove the respectability of the owner.

It was in vain that the envoys of the Dutch and Venetian republics sought redress for the enormous damage inflicted on their commerce by English pirates, and invoked the protection of public law. It was always easy for learned juris-consuls to prove such depredations to be consistent with international usage and with sound morality. Even at that period, although England was in population and in wealth so insignificant, it possessed a lofty, insular contempt for the opinions and the doctrines of other nations, and expected, with perfect calmness, that her own principles should be not only admitted, but spontaneously adored.

Yet the piratical interest was no longer the controlling one. That city on the Thames, which already numbered more than three hundred thousand inhabitants, had discovered that more wealth was to be accumulated by her bustling shopkeepers in the paths of legitimate industry than by a horde of rovers over the seas, however adventurous and however protected by Government.

As for France, she was already defending herself against piracy by what at the period seemed a masterpiece of internal improvement. The Seine, the Loire, and the Rhone were soon to be united in one chain of communication. Thus merchandise might be water-borne from the channel to the Mediterranean, without risking the five or six months' voyage by sea then required from Havre to Marseilles, and exposure along the whole coast to attack from the corsairs of England Spain and Barbary.

The envoys of the States-General had a brief audience of the new sovereign, in which little more than phrases of compliment were pronounced.

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"We are here," said Barneveld, "between grief and joy. We have lost her whose benefits to us we can never describe in words, but we have found a successor who is heir not only to her kingdom but to all her virtues." And with this exordium the great Advocate plunged at once into the depths of his subject, so far as was possible in an address of ceremony. He besought the king not to permit Spain, standing on the neck of the provinces, to grasp from that elevation at other empires. He reminded James of his duty to save those of his own religion from the clutch of a sanguinary superstition, to drive away those lurking satellites of the Roman pontiff who considered Britain their lawful prey. He implored him to complete the work so worthily begun by Elizabeth. If all those bound by one interest should now, he urged, unite their efforts, the Spaniard, deprived not only of the Netherlands, but, if he were not wise in time, banished from the ocean and stripped of all his transmarine possessions, would be obliged to consent to a peace founded on the only secure basis, equality of strength. The envoy concluded by beseeching the king for assistance to Ostend, now besieged for two years long.

But James manifested small disposition to melt in the fervour of the Advocate's eloquence. He answered with a few cold commonplaces. Benignant but extremely cautious, he professed goodwill enough to the States but quite as much for Spain, a power with which, he observed, he had never quarrelled, and from which he had received the most friendly offices. The archdukes, too, he asserted, had never been hostile to the realm, but only to the Queen of England. In brief, he was new to English affairs, required time to look about him, but would not disguise that his genius was literary, studious, and tranquil, and much more inclined to peace than to war.

In truth, James had cause to look very sharply about him. It required an acute brain and steady nerves to understand and to control the whirl of parties and the conflict of interests and intrigues, the chameleon shiftings of character and colour, at this memorable epoch of transition in the realm which he had just inherited. There was a Scotch party, favourable on the whole to France; there was a Spanish party, there was an English party, and, more busy than all, there was a party—not Scotch, nor French, nor English, nor Spanish—that un-dying party in all commonwealths or kingdoms which ever fights for itself and for the spoils.

France and Spain had made peace with each other at Vervins five years before, and had been at war ever since.

Nothing could be plainer nor more cynical than the language exchanged between the French monarch and the representative of Spain. That Philip III.—as the Spanish Government by a convenient fiction was always called—was the head and front of the great Savoy-Biron conspiracy to take Henry's life and dismember his kingdom, was hardly a stage secret. Yet diplomatic relations were still preserved between the two countries, and wonderful diplomatic interviews had certainly been taking place in Paris.

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Ambassador Tassis had walked with lofty port into Henry's cabinet, disdaining to salute any of the princes of the blood or high functionaries of state in the apartments through which he passed, and with insolent defiance had called Henry to account for his dealing with the Dutch rebels.

"Sire, the king my master finds it very strange," he said, "that you still continue to assist his rebels in Holland, and that you shoot at his troops on their way to the Netherlands. If you don't abstain from such infractions of his rights he prefers open war to being cheated by such a pretended peace. Hereupon I demand your reply."

"Mr. Ambassador," replied the king, "I find it still more strange that your master is so impudent as to dare to make such complaints—he who is daily making attempts upon my life and upon this State. Even if I do assist the Hollanders, what wrong is that to him? It is an organized commonwealth, powerful, neighbourly, acknowledging no subjection to him. But your master is stirring up rebellion in my own kingdom, addressing himself to the princes of my blood and my most notable officers, so that I have been obliged to cut off the head of one of the most beloved of them all. By these unchristian proceedings he has obliged me to take sides with the Hollanders, whom I know to be devoted to me; nor have I done anything for them except to pay the debts I owed them. I know perfectly well that the king your master is the head of this conspiracy, and that the troops of Naples were meditating an attack upon my kingdom. I have two letters written by the hand of your master to Marshal Biron, telling him to trust Fuentes as if it were himself, and it is notorious that Fuentes has projected and managed all the attempts to assassinate me. Do you, think you have a child to deal with? The late King of Spain knew me pretty well. If this one thinks himself wiser I shall let him see who I am. Do you want peace or war? I am ready for either."

The ambassador, whose head had thus been so vigorously washed—as Henry expressed it in recounting the interview afterwards to the Dutch envoy, Dr. Aerssens—stammered some unintelligible excuses, and humbly begged his Majesty not to be offended. He then retired quite crest-fallen, and took leave most politely of everybody as he went, down even to the very grooms of the chambers.

"You must show your teeth to the Spaniard," said Henry to Aerssens, "if you wish for a quiet life."

Here was unsophisticated diplomacy; for the politic Henry, who could forgive assassins and conspirators, crowned or otherwise, when it suited his purpose to be lenient, knew that it was on this occasion very prudent to use the gift of language, not in order to conceal, but to express his thoughts.

"I left the king as red as a turkey-cock," said Tassis, as soon as he got home that morning, "and I was another turkey-cock. We have been talking a little bit of truth to each other."

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In truth, it was impossible, as the world was then constituted, that France and Spain, in spite of many secret sympathies, should not be enemies; that France, England, and the Dutch commonwealth, although cordially disliking each other, should not be allies.

Even before the death of Elizabeth a very remarkable interview had taken place at Dover, in which the queen had secretly disclosed the great thoughts with which that most imperial brain was filled just before its boundless activity was to cease for ever.

She had wished for a personal interview with the French king, whose wit and valour she had always heartily admired, Henry, on his part, while unmercifully ridiculing that preterhuman vanity which he fed with fantastic adulation, never failed to do justice to her genius, and had been for a moment disposed to cross the channel, or even to hold council with her on board ship midway between the two countries. It was however found impracticable to arrange any such meeting, and the gossips of the day hinted that the great Henry, whose delight was in battle, and who had never been known to shrink from danger on dry land, was appalled at the idea of sea-sickness, and even dreaded the chance of being kidnapped by the English pirates.

The corsairs who drove so profitable a business at that period by plundering the merchantmen of their enemy, of their Dutch and French allies, and of their own nation, would assuredly have been pleased with such a prize.

The queen had confided to De Bethune that she had some thing to say to the king which she could never reveal to other ears than his, but when the proposed visit of Henry was abandoned, it was decided that his confidential minister should slip across the channel before Elizabeth returned to her palace at Greenwich.

De Bethune accordingly came incognito from Calais to Dover, in which port he had a long and most confidential interview with the queen. Then and there the woman, nearly seventy years of age, who governed despotically the half of a small island, while the other half was in the possession of a man whose mother she had slain, and of a people who hated the English more than they hated the Spaniards or the French—a queen with some three millions of loyal but most turbulent subjects in one island, and with about half-a-million ferocious rebels in another requiring usually an army of twenty thousand disciplined soldiers to keep them in a kind of subjugation, with a revenue fluctuating between eight hundred thousand pounds sterling, and the half of that sum, and with a navy of a hundred privateersmen—disclosed to the French envoy a vast plan for regulating the polity and the religion of the civilized world, and for remodelling the map of Europe.

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There should be three religions, said Elizabeth—not counting the dispensation from Mecca, about which Turk and Hun might be permitted to continue their struggle on the crepuscular limits of civilization. Everywhere else there should be toleration only for the churches of Peter, of Luther, and of Calvin. The house of Austria was to be humbled—the one branch driven back to Spain and kept there, the other branch to be deprived of the imperial crown, which was to be disposed of as in times past by the votes of the princely electors. There should be two republics—the Swiss and the Dutch—each of those commonwealths to be protected by France and England, and each to receive considerable parings out of the possessions of Spain and the empire.

Finally, all Christendom was to be divided off into a certain number of powers, almost exactly equal to each other; the weighing, measuring, and counting, necessary to obtain this international equilibrium, being of course the duty of the king and queen when they should sit some day together at table.

Thus there were five points; sovereigns and politicians having always a fondness for a neat summary in five or six points. Number one, to remodel the electoral system of the holy Roman empire. Number two, to establish the republic of the United Provinces. Number three, to do as much for Switzerland. Number four, to partition Europe. Number five, to reduce all religions to three. Nothing could be more majestic, no plan fuller fraught with tranquillity for the rulers of mankind and their subjects. Thrice happy the people, having thus a couple of heads with crowns upon them and brains within them to prescribe what was to be done in this world and believed as to the next!

The illustrious successor of that great queen now stretches her benignant sceptre over two hundred millions of subjects, and the political revenues of her empire are more than a hundredfold those of Elizabeth; yet it would hardly now be thought great statesmanship or sound imperial policy for a British sovereign even to imagine the possibility of the five points which filled the royal English mind at Dover.

But Henry was as much convinced as Elizabeth of the necessity and the possibility of establishing the five points, and De Bethune had been astonished at the exact similarity of the conclusion which those two sovereign intellects had reached, even before they had been placed in communion with each other. The death of the queen had not caused any change in the far-reaching designs of which the king now remained the sole executor, and his first thought, on the accession of James, was accordingly to despatch De Bethune, now created Marquis de Rosny, as ambassador extraordinary to England, in order that the new sovereign might be secretly but thoroughly instructed as to the scheme for remodelling Christendom.

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As Rosny was also charged with the duty of formally congratulating King James, he proceeded upon his journey with remarkable pomp. He was accompanied by two hundred gentlemen of quality, specially attached to his embassy—young city fops, as he himself described them, who were out of their element whenever they left the pavement of Paris—and by an equal number of valets, grooms, and cooks. Such a retinue was indispensable to enable an ambassador to transact the public business and to maintain the public dignity in those days; unproductive consumption being accounted most sagacious and noble.

Before reaching the English shore the marquis was involved in trouble. Accepting the offer of the English vice-admiral lying off Calais, he embarked with his suite in two English vessels, much to the dissatisfaction of De Vic, vice-admiral of France, who was anxious to convey the French ambassador in the war-ships of his country. There had been suspicion afloat as to the good understanding between England and Spain, caused by the great courtesy recently shown to the Count of Arenberg, and there was intense irritation among all the seafaring people of France on account of the exploits of the English corsairs upon their coast. Rosny thought it best to begin his embassy by an act of conciliation, but soon had cause to repent his decision.

In mid-channel they were met by De Vic's vessels with the French banner displayed, at which sight the English commander was so wroth that he forthwith ordered a broadside to be poured into the audacious foreigner; —swearing with mighty oaths that none but the English flag should be shown in those waters. And thus, while conveying a French ambassador and three hundred Frenchmen on a sacred mission to the British sovereign, this redoubtable mariner of England prepared to do battle with the ships of France. It was with much difficulty and some prevarication that Rosny appeased the strife, representing that the French flag had only been raised in order that it might be dipped, in honour of the French ambassador, as the ships passed each other. The full-shotted broadside was fired from fifty guns, but the English commander consented, at De Rosny's representations, that it should be discharged wide of the mark.

A few shots, however, struck the side of one of the French vessels, and at the same time, as Cardinal Richelieu afterwards remarked, pierced the heart of every patriotic Frenchman.

The ambassador made a sign, which De Vic understood; to lower his flag and to refrain from answering the fire. Thus a battle between allies, amid the most amazing circumstances, was avoided, but it may well be imagined how long and how deeply the poison of the insult festered.

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Such an incident could hardly predispose the ambassador in favour of the nation he was about to visit, or strengthen his hope of laying, not only the foundation of a perpetual friendship between the two crowns, but of effecting the palingenesis of Europe. Yet no doubt Sully—as the world has so long learned to call him—was actuated by lofty sentiments in many respects in advance of his age. Although a brilliant and successful campaigner in his youth, he detested war, and looked down with contempt at political systems which had not yet invented anything better than gunpowder for the arbitrament of international disputes. Instead of war being an occasional method of obtaining peace, it pained him to think that peace seemed only a process for arriving at war. Surely it was no epigram in those days, but the simplest statement of commonplace fact, that war was the normal condition of Christians. Alas will it be maintained that in the two and a half centuries which have since elapsed the world has made much progress in a higher direction? Is there yet any appeal among the most civilized nations except to the logic of the largest battalions and the eloquence of the biggest guns?

De Rosny came to be the harbinger of a political millennium, and he heartily despised war. The schemes, nevertheless, which were as much his own as his master's, and which he was instructed to lay before the English monarch as exclusively his own, would have required thirty years of successful and tremendous warfare before they could have a beginning of development.

It is not surprising that so philosophical a mind as his, while still inclining to pacific designs, should have been led by what met his eyes and ears to some rather severe generalizations.

"It is certain that the English hate us," he said, "and with a hatred so strong and so general that one is tempted to place it among the natural dispositions of this people. Yet it is rather the effect of their pride and their presumption; since there is no nation in Europe more haughty, more disdainful, more besotted with the idea of its own excellence. If you were to take their word for it, mind and reason are only found with them; they adore all their opinions and despise those of all other nations; and it never occurs to them to listen to others, or to doubt themselves Examine what are called with them maxims of state; you will find nothing but the laws of pride itself, adopted through arrogance or through indolence."

"Placed by nature amidst the tempestuous and variable ocean," he wrote to his sovereign, "they are as shifting, as impetuous, as changeable as its waves. So self-contradictory and so inconsistent are their actions almost in the same instant as to make it impossible that they should proceed from the same persons and the same mind. Agitated and urged by their pride and arrogance alone, they take all their imaginations and extravagances for truths and realities; the objects of their desires and affections for inevitable events; not balancing and measuring those desires with the

actual condition of things, nor with the character of the people with whom they have to deal.”

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When the ambassador arrived in London he was lodged at Arundel palace. He at once became the cynosure of all indigenous parties and of adventurous politicians from every part of Europe; few knowing how to shape their course since the great familiar lustre had disappeared from the English sky.

Rosny found the Scotch lords sufficiently favourable to France; the English Catholic grandees, with all the Howards and the lord high admiral at their head, excessively inclined to Spain, and a great English party detesting both Spain and France with equal fervour and well enough disposed to the United Provinces, not as hating that commonwealth less but the two great powers more.

The ambassador had arrived with the five points, not in his portfolio but in his heart, and they might after all be concentrated in one phrase— Down with Austria, up with the Dutch republic. On his first interview with Cecil, who came to arrange for his audience with the king, he found the secretary much disposed to conciliate both Spain and the empire, and to leave the provinces to shift for themselves.

He spoke of Ostend as of a town not worth the pains taken to preserve it, and of the India trade as an advantage of which a true policy required that the United Provinces should be deprived. Already the fine commercial instinct of England had scented a most formidable rival on the ocean.

As for the king, he had as yet declared himself for no party, while all parties were disputing among each other for mastery over him. James found himself, in truth, as much, astray in English politics as he was a foreigner upon English earth. Suspecting every one, afraid of every one, he was in mortal awe, most of all, of his wife, who being the daughter of one Protestant sovereign and wife of another, and queen of a united realm dependent for its very existence on antagonism to Spain and Rome, was naturally inclined to Spanish politics and the Catholic faith.

The turbulent and intriguing Anne of Denmark was not at the moment in London, but James was daily expecting and De Bethune dreading her arrival.

The ambassador knew very well that, although the king talked big in her absence about the forms which he intended to prescribe for her conduct, he would take orders from her as soon as she arrived, refuse her nothing, conceal nothing from her, and tremble before her as usual.

The king was not specially prejudiced in favour of the French monarch or his ambassador, for he had been told that Henry had occasionally spoken of him as captain of arts and doctor of arms, and that both the Marquis de Rosny and his brother were known to have used highly disrespectful language concerning him.

Before his audience, De Rosny received a private visit from Barneveld and the deputies of the States-General, and was informed that since his arrival they had been treated with more civility by the king. Previously he had refused to see them after the first official reception, had not been willing to grant Count Henry of Nassau a private audience, and had spoken publicly of the States as seditious rebels.

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On the 21st June Barneveld had a long private interview with the ambassador at Arundel palace, when he exerted all his eloquence to prove the absolute necessity of an offensive and defensive alliance between France and the United Provinces if the independence of the republic were ever to be achieved. Unless a French army took the field at once, Ostend would certainly fall, he urged, and resistance to the Spaniards would soon afterwards cease.

It is not probable that the Advocate felt in his heart so much despair as his words indicated, but he was most anxious that Henry should openly declare himself the protector of the young commonwealth, and not indisposed perhaps to exaggerate the dangers, grave as they were without doubt, by which its existence was menaced.

The ambassador however begged the Hollander to renounce any such hopes, assuring him that the king had no intention of publicly and singly taking upon his shoulders the whole burden of war with Spain, the fruits of which would not be his to gather. Certainly before there had been time thoroughly to study the character and inclinations of the British monarch it would be impossible for De Rosny to hold out any encouragement in this regard. He then asked Barneveld what he had been able to discover during his residence in London as to the personal sentiments of James.

The Advocate replied that at first the king, yielding to his own natural tendencies, and to the advice of his counsellors, had refused the Dutch deputies every hope, but that subsequently reflecting, as it would seem, that peace would cost England very dear if English inaction should cause the Hollanders to fall again under the dominion of the Catholic king, or to find their only deliverance in the protection of France, and beginning to feel more acutely how much England had herself to fear from a power like Spain, he had seemed to awake out of a profound sleep, and promised to take these important affairs into consideration.

Subsequently he had fallen into a dreary abyss of indecision, where he still remained. It was certain however that he would form no resolution without the concurrence of the King of France, whose ambassador he had been so impatiently expecting, and whose proposition to him of a double marriage between their respective children had given him much satisfaction.

De Rosny felt sure that the Dutch statesmen were far too adroit to put entire confidence in anything said by James, whether favourable or detrimental to their cause. He conjured Barneveld therefore, by the welfare of his country, to conceal nothing from him in regard to the most secret resolutions that might have been taken by the States in the event of their being abandoned by England, or in case of their being embarrassed by a sudden demand on the part of that power for the cautionary towns offered to Elizabeth.

Barneveld, thus pressed, and considering the ambassador as the confidential counsellor of a sovereign who was the republic's only friend, no longer hesitated.

Making a merit to himself of imparting an important secret, he said that the state-council of the commonwealth had resolved to elude at any cost the restoration of the cautionary towns.

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The interview was then abruptly terminated by the arrival of the Venetian envoy.

The 22nd of June arrived. The marquis had ordered mourning suits for his whole embassy and retinue, by particular command of his sovereign, who wished to pay this public tribute to the memory of the great queen.

To his surprise and somewhat to his indignation, he was however informed that no one, stranger or native, Scotchman or Englishman, had been permitted to present himself to the king in black, that his appearance there in mourning would be considered almost an affront, and that it was a strictly enforced rule at court to abstain from any mention of Elizabeth, and to affect an entire oblivion of her reign.

At the last moment, and only because convinced that he might otherwise cause the impending negotiations utterly to fail, the ambassador consented to attire himself, the hundred and twenty gentlemen selected from his diplomatic family to accompany him on this occasion, and all his servants, in gala costume. The royal guards, with the Earl of Derby at their head, came early in the afternoon to Arundel House to escort him to the Thames, and were drawn up on the quay as the marquis and his followers embarked in the splendid royal barges provided to convey them to Greenwich.

On arriving at their destination they were met at the landing by the Earl of Northumberland, and escorted with great pomp and through an infinite multitude of spectators to the palace. Such was the crowd, without and within, of courtiers and common people, that it was a long time before the marquis, preceded by his hundred and twenty gentlemen, reached the hall of audience.

At last he arrived at the foot of the throne, when James arose and descended eagerly two steps of the dais in order to greet the ambassador. He would have descended them all had not one of the counsellors plucked him by the sleeve, whispering that he had gone quite far enough.

“And if I honour this ambassador,” cried James, in a loud voice, “more than is usual, I don’t intend that it shall serve as a precedent for others. I esteem and love him particularly, because of the affection which I know he cherishes for me, of his firmness in our religion, and of his fidelity to his master.”

Much more that was personally flattering to the marquis was said thus emphatically by James. To all this the ambassador replied, not by a set discourse, but only by a few words of compliment, expressing his sovereign’s regrets at the death of Queen Elizabeth, and his joy at the accession of the new sovereign. He then delivered his letters of credence, and the complimentary conversation continued; the king declaring that he had not left behind him in Scotland his passion for the monarch of France, and that even had he found England at war with that country on his accession he would have instantly concluded a peace with a prince whom he so much venerated.

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Thus talking, the king caused his guest to ascend with him to the uppermost steps of the dais, babbling on very rapidly and skipping abruptly from one subject to another. De Rosny took occasion to express his personal esteem and devotion, and was assured by the king in reply that the slanders in regard to him which had reached the royal ears had utterly failed of their effect. It was obvious that they were the invention of Spanish intriguers who wished to help that nation to universal monarchy. Then he launched forth into general and cordial abuse of Spain, much to the satisfaction of Count Henry of Nassau, who stood near enough to hear a good deal of the conversation, and of the other Dutch deputies who were moving about, quite unknown, in the crowd. He denounced very vigorously the malignity of the Spaniards in lighting fires everywhere in their neighbours' possessions, protested that he would always oppose their wicked designs, but spoke contemptuously of their present king as too feeble of mind and body ever to comprehend or to carry out the projects of his predecessors.

Among other gossip, James asked the envoy if he went to hear the Protestant preaching in London. Being answered in the affirmative, he expressed surprise, having been told, he said, that it was Rosny's intention to repudiate his religion as De Sancy had done, in order to secure his fortunes. The marquis protested that such a thought had never entered his head, but intimated that the reports might come from his familiar intercourse with the papal nuncio and many French ecclesiastics. The king asked if, when speaking with the nuncio, he called the pope his Holiness, as by so doing he would greatly offend God, in whom alone was holiness. Rosny replied that he commonly used the style prevalent at court, governing himself according to the rules adopted in regard to pretenders to crowns and kingdoms which they thought belonged to them, but the possession of which was in other hands, conceding to them, in order not to offend them, the titles which they claimed.

James shook his head portentously, and changed the subject.

The general tone of the royal-conversation was agreeable enough to the ambassador, who eagerly alluded to the perfidious conduct of a Government which, ever since concluding the peace of Vervins with Henry, had been doing its best to promote sedition and territorial dismemberment in his kingdom, and to assist all his open and his secret enemies.

James assented very emphatically, and the marquis felt convinced that a resentment against Spain, expressed so publicly and so violently by James, could hardly fail to, be sincere. He began seriously to, hope that his negotiations would be successful, and was for soaring at once into the regions of high politics, when the king suddenly began to talk of hunting.

"And so you sent half the stag I sent you; to Count Arenberg," said James; "but he is very angry about it; thinking that you did so to show how much more I make of you than I do of him. And so I do; for I know the difference between your king, my brother; and

his masters who have sent me an ambassador who can neither walk nor talk, and who asked me to give him audience in a garden because he cannot go upstairs.”

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The king then alluded to Tassis, chief courier of his Catholic Majesty and special envoy from Spain, asking whether the marquis had seen him on his passage through France.

“Spain sends me a postillion-ambassador,” said he, “that he may travel the faster and attend to business by post.”

It was obvious that James took a sincere satisfaction in abusing everything relating to that country from its sovereign and the Duke of Lerma downwards; but he knew very well that Velasco, constable of Castile, had been already designated as ambassador, and would soon be on his way to England.

De Rosny on the termination of his audience, was escorted in great state by the Earl of Northumberland to the barges.

A few days later, the ambassador had another private audience, in which the king expressed himself with apparent candour concerning the balance of power.

Christendom, in his opinion, should belong in three equal shares to the families of Stuart, Bourbon, and Habsburg; but personal ambition and the force of events had given to the house of Austria more than its fair third. Sound policy therefore required a combination between France and England, in order to reduce their copartner within proper limits. This was satisfactory as far as it went, and the ambassador complimented the king on his wide views of policy and his lofty sentiments in regard to human rights.

Warming with the subject, James held language very similar to that which De Rosny and his master had used in their secret conferences, and took the ground unequivocally that the secret war levied by Spain against France and England, as exemplified in the Biron conspiracy, the assault on Geneva, the aid of the Duke of Savoy, and in the perpetual fostering of Jesuit intrigues, plots of assassination, and other conspiracies in the British islands, justified a secret war on the part of Henry and himself against Philip.

The ambassador would have been more deeply impressed with the royal language had he felt more confidence in the royal character.

Highly applauding the sentiments expressed, and desiring to excite still further the resentment of James against Spain, he painted a vivid picture of the progress of that aggressive power in the past century. She had devoured Flanders, Burgundy, Granada, Navarre, Portugal, the German Empire, Milan, Naples, and all the Indies. If she had not swallowed likewise both France and England those two crowns were indebted for their preservation, after the firmness of Elizabeth and Henry, to the fortunate incident of the revolt of the Netherlands.



De Rosny then proceeded to expound the necessity under which James would soon find himself of carrying on open war with Spain, and of the expediency of making preparations for the great struggle without loss of time.

He therefore begged the king to concert with him some satisfactory measure for the preservation of the United Provinces.

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“But,” said James, “what better assistance could we give the Netherlanders than to divide their territory between the States and Spain; agreeing at the same time to drive the Spaniard out altogether, if he violates the conditions which we should guarantee.”

This conclusion was not very satisfactory to De Rosny, who saw in the bold language of the king—followed thus by the indication of a policy that might last to the Greek Kalends, and permit Ostend, Dutch Flanders, and even the republic to fall—nothing but that mixture of timidity, conceit, and procrastination which marked the royal character. He pointed out to him accordingly that Spanish statesmanship could beat the world in the art of delay, and of plucking the fruits of delay, and that when the United Provinces had been once subjugated, the turn of England would come. It would be then too late for him to hope to preserve himself by such measures as, taken now, would be most salutary.

A few days later the king invited De Rosny and the two hundred members of his embassy to dine at Greenwich, and the excursion down the Thames took place with the usual pomp.

The two hundred dined with the gentlemen of the court; while at the king's table, on an elevated platform in the same hall, were no guests but De Rosny, and the special envoy of France, Count Beaumont.

The furniture and decorations of the table were sumptuous, and the attendants, to the surprise of the Frenchmen, went on their knees whenever they offered wine or dishes to the king. The conversation at first was on general topics, such as the heat of the weather, which happened to be remarkable, the pleasures of the chase, and the merits of the sermon which, as it was Sunday, De Rosny had been invited to hear before dinner in the royal chapel.

Soon afterwards, however, some allusion being made to the late queen, James spoke of her with contempt. He went so far as to say that, for a long time before her death, he had governed the councils, of England; all her ministers obeying and serving him much better than they did herself. He then called for wine, and, stretching out his glass towards his two guests, drank to the health of the king and queen and royal family of France.

De Rosny, replied by proposing the health of his august host, not forgetting the queen and their children, upon which the king, putting his lips close to the ambassador's ear, remarked that his next toast should be in honour of the matrimonial union which was proposed between the families of Britain and France.

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This was the first allusion made by James to the alliance; and the occasion did not strike the marquis as particularly appropriate to such a topic. He however replied in a whisper that he was rejoiced to hear this language from the king, having always believed that there would be no hesitation on his part between King Henry and the monarch of Spain, who, as he was aware, had made a similar proposition. James, expressing surprise that his guest was so well informed, avowed that he had in fact received the same offer of the Infanta for his son as had been made to his Christian Majesty for the Dauphin. What more convenient counters in the great game of state than an infant prince and princess in each of the three royal families to which Europe belonged! To how many grave political combinations were these unfortunate infants to give rise, and how distant the period when great nations might no longer be tied to the pinafores of children in the nursery!

After this little confidential interlude, James expressed in loud voice, so that all might hear, his determination never to permit the subjugation of the Netherlands by Spain. Measures should be taken the very next day, he promised, in concert with the ambassador, as to the aid to be given to the States. Upon the faith of this declaration De Rosny took from his pocket the plan of a treaty, and forthwith, in the presence of all the ministers, placed it in the hands of the king, who meantime had risen from table. The ambassador also took this occasion to speak publicly of the English piracies upon French commerce while the two nations were at peace. The king, in reply, expressed his dissatisfaction at these depredations and at the English admiral who attempted to defend what had been done.

He then took leave of his guests, and went off to bed, where it was his custom to pass his afternoons.

It was certain that the Constable of Castile was now to arrive very soon, and the marquis had, meantime, obtained information on which he relied, that this ambassador would come charged with very advantageous offers to the English court. Accounts had been got ready in council, of all the moneys due to England by France and by the States, and it was thought that these sums, payment of which was to be at once insisted upon, together with the Spanish dollars set afloat in London, would prove sufficient to buy up all resistance to the Spanish alliance.

Such being the nature of the information furnished to De Rosny, he did not look forward with very high hopes to the issue of the conference indicated by King James at the Greenwich dinner. As, after all, he would have to deal once more with Cecil, the master-spirit of the Spanish party, it did not seem very probable that the king's whispered professions of affection for France, his very loud denunciations of Spanish ambition, and his promises of support to the struggling provinces, would be brought into any substantial form for human nourishment. Whispers and big words, touching of glasses at splendid banquets, and proposing of royal toasts, would not go far to help

those soldiers in Ostend, a few miles away, fighting two years long already for a square half-mile of barren sand, in which seemed centred the world's hopes of freedom.

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Barneveld was inclined to take an even more gloomy view than that entertained by the French ambassador. He had, in truth, no reason to be sanguine. The honest republican envoys had brought no babies to offer in marriage. Their little commonwealth had only the merit of exchanging buffets forty years long with a power which, after subjugating the Netherlands, would have liked to annihilate France and England too, and which, during that period, had done its best to destroy and dismember both. It had only struggled as no nation in the world's history had ever done, for the great principle upon which the power and happiness of England were ever to depend. It was therefore not to be expected that its representatives should be received with the distinction conferred upon royal envoys. Barneveld and his colleagues accordingly were not invited, with two hundred noble hangers-on, to come down the Thames in gorgeous array, and dine at Greenwich palace; but they were permitted to mix in the gaping crowd of spectators, to see the fine folk, and to hear a few words at a distance which fell from august lips. This was not very satisfactory, as Barneveld could rarely gain admittance to James or his ministers. De Rosny, however, was always glad to confer with him, and was certainly capable of rendering justice both to his genius and to the sacredness of his cause. The Advocate, in a long conference with the ambassador, thought it politic to paint the situation of the republic in even more sombre colours than seemed to De Rosny justifiable. He was, indeed, the more struck with Barneveld's present despondency, because, at a previous conference, a few days before, he had spoken almost with contempt of the Spaniards, expressing the opinion that the mutinous and disorganized condition of the archduke's army rendered the conquest of Ostend improbable, and hinted at a plan, of which the world as yet knew nothing, which would save that place, or at any rate would secure such an advantage for the States as to more than counterbalance its possible loss? This very sanguine demeanour had rather puzzled those who had conferred with the Advocate, although they were ere long destined to understand his allusions, and it was certainly a contrast to his present gloom. He assured De Rosny that the Hollanders were becoming desperate, and that they were capable of abandoning their country in mass, and seeking an asylum beyond the seas? The menace was borrowed from the famous project conceived by William the Silent in darker days, and seemed to the ambassador a present anachronism.

Obviously it was thought desirable to force the French policy to extreme lengths, and Barneveld accordingly proposed that Henry should take the burthen upon his shoulders of an open war with Spain, in the almost certain event that England would make peace with that power. De Rosny calmly intimated to the Advocate that this was asking something entirely beyond his power to grant, as the special object of his mission was to form a plan of concerted action with England.

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The cautionary towns being next mentioned, Barneveld stated that a demand had been made upon Envoy Caron by Cecil for the delivery of those places to the English Government, as England had resolved to make peace with Spain.

The Advocate confided, however, to De Rosny that the States would interpose difficulties, and that it would be long before the towns were delivered. This important information was given under the seal of strictest secrecy, and was coupled with an inference that a war between the republic and Britain would be the probable result, in which case the States relied upon the alliance with France. The ambassador replied that in this untoward event the republic would have the sympathy of his royal master, but that it would be out of the question for him to go to war with Spain and England at the same time.

On the same afternoon there was a conference at Arundel House between the Dutch deputies, the English counsellors, and De Rosny, when Barneveld drew a most dismal picture of the situation; taking the ground that now or never was the time for driving the Spaniards entirely out of the Netherlands. Cecil said in a general way that his Majesty felt a deep interest in the cause of the provinces, and the French ambassador summoned the Advocate, now that he was assured of the sympathy of two great kings, to furnish some plan by which that sympathy might be turned to account. Barneveld, thinking figures more eloquent than rhetoric, replied that the States, besides garrisons, had fifteen thousand infantry and three thousand cavalry in the field, and fifty warships in commission, with artillery and munitions in proportion, and that it would be advisable for France and England to furnish an equal force, military and naval, to the common cause.

De Rosny smiled at the extravagance of the proposition. Cecil, again taking refuge in commonplaces, observed that his master was disposed to keep the peace with all his neighbours, but that, having due regard to the circumstances, he was willing to draw a line between the wishes of the States and his own, and would grant them a certain amount of succour underhand.

Thereupon the Dutch deputies withdrew to confer. De Rosny, who had no faith in Cecil's sincerity—the suggestion being essentially the one which he had himself desired—went meantime a little deeper into the subject, and soon found that England, according to the Secretary of State, had no idea of ruining herself for the sake of the provinces, or of entering into any positive engagements in their behalf. In case Spain should make a direct attack upon the two kings who were to constitute themselves protectors of Dutch liberty, it might be necessary to take up arms. The admission was on the whole superfluous, it not being probable that Britain, even under a Stuart, would be converted to the doctrine of non-resistance. Yet in this case it was suggested by Cecil that the chief reliance of his Government would be on the debts owed by the Dutch and French respectively, which would then be forthwith collected.

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De Rosny was now convinced that Cecil was trifling with him, and evidently intending to break off all practical negotiations. He concealed his annoyance, however, as well as he could, and simply intimated that the first business of importance was to arrange for the relief of Ostend; that eventualities, such as the possible attack by Spain upon France and England, might for the moment be deferred, but that if England thought it a safe policy to ruin Henry by throwing on his shoulders the whole burthen of a war with the common enemy, she would discover and deeply regret her fatal mistake. The time was a very ill-chosen one to summon France to pay old debts, and his Christian Majesty had given his ambassador no instructions contemplating such a liquidation.

It was the intention to discharge the sum annually, little by little, but if England desired to exhaust the king by these peremptory demands, it was an odious conduct, and very different from any that France had ever pursued.

The English counsellors were not abashed by this rebuke, but became, on the contrary, very indignant, avowing that if anything more was demanded of them, England would entirely abandon the United Provinces. "Cecil made himself known to me in this conference," said De Rosny, "for exactly what he was. He made use only of double meanings and vague propositions; feeling that reason was not on his side. He was forced to blush at his own self-contradictions, when, with a single word, I made him feel the absurdity of his language. Now, endeavouring to intimidate me, he exaggerated the strength of England, and again he enlarged upon the pretended offers made by Spain to that nation."

The secretary, desirous to sow discord between the Dutch deputies and the ambassador, then observed that France ought to pay to England £50,000 upon the nail, which sum would be at once appropriated to the necessities of the States. "But what most enraged me," said De Rosny, "was to see these ministers, who had come to me to state the intentions of their king, thus impudently substitute their own; for I knew that he had commanded them to do the very contrary to that which they did."

The conference ended with a suggestion by Cecil, that as France would only undertake a war in conjunction with England, and as England would only consent to this if paid by France and the States, the best thing for the two kings to do would be to do nothing, but to continue to live in friendship together, without troubling themselves about foreign complications.

This was the purpose towards which the English counsellors had been steadily tending, and these last words of Cecil seemed to the ambassador the only sincere ones spoken by him in the whole conference.

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"If I kept silence," said the ambassador, "it was not because I acquiesced in their reasoning. On the contrary, the manner in which they had just revealed themselves, and avowed themselves in a certain sort liars and impostors, had given me the most profound contempt for them. I thought, however, that by heating myself and contending with them so far from causing them to abandon a resolution which they had taken in concert—I might even bring about a total rupture. On the other hand, matters remaining as they were, and a friendship existing between the two kings, which might perhaps be cemented by a double marriage, a more favourable occasion might present itself for negotiation. I did not yet despair of the success of my mission, because I believed that the king had no part in the designs which his counsellors wished to carry out."

That the counsellors, then struggling for dominion over the new king and his kingdom, understood the character of their sovereign better than did the ambassador, future events were likely enough to prove. That they preferred peace to war, and the friendship of Spain to an alliance, offensive and defensive, with France in favour of a republic which they detested, is certain. It is difficult, however, to understand why they were "liars and impostors" because, in a conference with the representative of France, they endeavoured to make their own opinions of public policy valid rather than content themselves simply with being the errand-bearers of the new king, whom they believed incapable of being stirred to an honourable action.

The whole political atmosphere of Europe was mephitic with falsehood, and certainly the gales which blew from the English court at the accession of James were not fragrant, but De Rosny had himself come over from France under false pretences. He had been charged by his master to represent Henry's childish scheme, which he thought so gigantic, for the regeneration of Europe, as a project of his own, which he was determined to bring to execution, even at the risk of infidelity to his sovereign, and the first element in that whole policy was to carry on war underhand against a power with which his master had just sworn to preserve peace. In that age at least it was not safe for politicians to call each other hard names.

The very next day De Rosny had a long private interview with James at Greenwich. Being urged to speak without reserve, the ambassador depicted the privy counsellors to the king as false to his instructions, traitors to the best interests of their country, the humble servants of Spain, and most desirous to make their royal master the slave of that power, under the name of its ally. He expressed the opinion, accordingly, that James would do better in obeying only the promptings of his own superior wisdom, rather than the suggestions of the intriguers about him. The adroit De Rosny thus softly insinuated to the flattered monarch that the designs of France were the fresh emanations of his own royal intellect. It was the whim of James to imagine himself extremely like Henry of Bourbon in character, and he affected to take the wittiest, bravest, most adventurous, and most adroit knight-errant that ever won and wore a crown as his perpetual model.

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It was delightful, therefore, to find himself in company with his royal brother; making and unmaking kings; destroying empires, altering the whole face of Christendom, and, better than all, settling then and for ever the theology of the whole world, without the trouble of moving from his easy chair, or of incurring any personal danger.

He entered at once, with the natural tendency to suspicion of a timid man, into the views presented by De Rosny as to the perfidy of his counsellors. He changed colour; and was visibly moved, as the ambassador gave his version of the recent conference with Cecil and the other ministers, and, being thus artfully stimulated, he was, prepared to receive with much eagerness the portentous communications now to be made.

The ambassador, however, caused him to season his admiration until he had taken a most solemn oath, by the sacrament of the Eucharist, never to reveal a syllable of what he was about to hear. This done, and the royal curiosity excited almost beyond endurance, De Rosny began to, unfold. the stupendous schemes which had been, concerted between Elizabeth and Henry at Dover, and which formed the secret object of his present embassy. Feeling that the king was most malleable in the theological part of his structure, the wily envoy struck his first blows in that direction; telling him that his own interest in the religious, condition of Europe, and especially in the firm establishment of the Protestant faith, far surpassed in his mind all considerations of fortune, country, or even of fidelity to his sovereign. Thus far, political considerations had kept Henry from joining in the great Catholic League, but it was possible that a change might occur in his system, and the Protestant form of worship, abandoned by its ancient protector, might disappear entirely from France and from Europe. De Rosny had, therefore, felt the necessity of a new patron for the reformed religion in this great emergency, and had naturally fixed his eyes on the puissant and sagacious prince who now occupied, the British throne. Now was the time, he urged, for James to immortalize his name by becoming the arbiter of the destiny of Europe. It would always seem his own design, although Henry was equally interested in it with himself. The plan was vast but simple, and perfectly easy of execution. There would be no difficulty in constructing an all-powerful league of sovereigns for the destruction of the house of Austria, the foundation-stones of which would of course be France, Great Britain, and the United Provinces. The double marriage between the Bourbon and Stuart families would indissolubly unite the two kingdoms, while interest and gratitude; a common hatred and a common love, would bind the republic as firmly to the union. Denmark and Sweden were certainly to be relied upon, as well as all other Protestant princes. The ambitious and restless Duke of Savoy would be gained by the offer of Lombardy and a kingly crown, notwithstanding his matrimonial connection with Spain. As for the German princes, they would come greedily into the arrangement, as the league, rich in the spoils of the Austrian house, would have Hungary, Bohemia, Silesia, Moravia, the archduchies, and other splendid provinces to divide among them.

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The pope would be bought up by a present, in fee-simple, of Naples, and other comfortable bits of property, of which he was now only feudal lord. Sicily would be an excellent sop for the haughty republic of Venice. The Franche Comte; Alsace, Tirol, were naturally to be annexed to Switzerland; Liege and the heritage of the Duke of Cleves and Juliers to the Dutch commonwealth.

The King of France, who, according to De Rosny's solemn assertions, was entirely ignorant of the whole scheme, would, however, be sure to embrace it very heartily when James should propose it to him, and would be far too disinterested to wish to keep any of the booty for himself. A similar self-denial was, of course, expected of James, the two great kings satisfying themselves with the proud consciousness of having saved society, rescued the world from the sceptre of an Austrian universal monarchy, and regenerated European civilization for all future time.

The monarch listened with ravished ears, interposed here and there a question or a doubt, but devoured every detail of the scheme, as the ambassador slowly placed it before him.

De Rosny showed that the Spanish faction was not in reality so powerful as the league which would be constructed for its overthrow. It was not so much a religious as a political frontier which separated the nations. He undertook to prove this, but, after all, was obliged to demonstrate that the defection of Henry from the Protestant cause had deprived him of his natural allies, and given him no true friends in exchange for the old ones.

Essentially the Catholics were ranged upon one side, and the Protestants on the other, but both religions were necessary to Henry the Huguenot: The bold free-thinker adroitly balanced himself upon each creed. In making use of a stern and conscientious Calvinist, like Maximilian de Bethune, in his first assault upon the theological professor who now stood in Elizabeth's place, he showed the exquisite tact which never failed him. Toleration for the two religions which had political power, perfect intolerance for all others; despotic forms of polity, except for two little republics which were to be smothered with protection and never left out of leading strings, a thorough recasting of governments and races, a palingenesis of Europe, a nominal partition of its hegemony between France and England, which was to be in reality absorbed by France, and the annihilation of Austrian power east and west, these were the vast ideas with which that teeming Bourbon brain was filled. It is the instinct both of poetic and of servile minds to associate a sentiment of grandeur with such fantastic dreams, but usually on condition that the dreamer wears a crown. When the regenerator of society appears with a wisp of straw upon his head, unappreciative society is apt to send him back to his cell. There, at least, his capacity for mischief is limited.

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If to do be as grand as to imagine what it were good to do, then the Dutchmen in Hell's Mouth and the Porcupine fighting Universal Monarchy inch by inch and pike to pike, or trying conclusions with the ice-bears of Nova Zembla, or capturing whole Portuguese fleets in the Moluccas, were effecting as great changes in the world, and doing perhaps as much for the advancement of civilization, as James of the two Britains and Henry of France and Navarre in those his less heroic days, were likely to accomplish. History has long known the results.

The ambassador did his work admirably. The king embraced him in a transport of enthusiasm, vowed by all that was most sacred to accept the project in all its details, and exacted from the ambassador in his turn an oath on the Eucharist never to reveal, except to his master, the mighty secrets of their conference.

The interview had lasted four hours. When it was concluded, James summoned Cecil, and in presence of the ambassador and of some of the counsellors, lectured him soundly on his presumption in disobeying the royal commands in his recent negotiations with De Rosny. He then announced his decision to ally himself strictly with France against Spain in consequence of the revelations just made to him, and of course to espouse the cause of the United Provinces. Telling the crest-fallen Secretary of State to make the proper official communications on the subject to the ambassadors of my lords the States-General,—thus giving the envoys from the republic for the first time that pompous designation, the king turned once more to the marquis with the exclamation, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, this time I hope that you are satisfied with me?"

In the few days following De Rosny busied himself in drawing up a plan of a treaty embodying all that had been agreed upon between Henry and himself, and which he had just so faithfully rehearsed to James. He felt now some inconvenience from his own artfulness, and was in a measure caught in his own trap. Had he brought over a treaty in his pocket, James would have signed it on the spot, so eager was he for the regeneration of Europe. It was necessary, however, to continue the comedy a little longer, and the ambassador, having thought it necessary to express many doubts whether his master could be induced to join in the plot, and to approve what was really his own most cherished plan, could now do no more than promise to use all his powers of persuasion unto that end.

The project of a convention, which James swore most solemnly to sign, whether it were sent to him in six weeks or six months, was accordingly rapidly reduced to writing and approved. It embodied, of course, most of the provisions discussed in the last secret interview at Greenwich. The most practical portion of it undoubtedly related to the United Provinces, and to the nature of assistance to be at once afforded to that commonwealth, the only ally of the two kingdoms

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expressly mentioned in the treaty. England was to furnish troops, the number of which was not specified, and France was to pay for them, partly out of her own funds, partly out of the amount due by her to England. It was, however, understood, that this secret assistance should not be considered to infringe the treaty of peace which already existed between Henry and the Catholic king. Due and detailed arrangements were made as to the manner in which the allies were to assist each other, in case Spain, not relishing this kind of neutrality, should think proper openly to attack either great Britain or France, or both.

Unquestionably the Dutch republic was the only portion of Europe likely to be substantially affected by these secret arrangements; for, after all, it had not been found very easy to embody the splendid visions of Henry, which had so dazzled the imagination of James in the dry clauses of a protocol.

It was also characteristic enough of the crowned conspirators, that the clause relating to the United Provinces provided that the allies would either assist them in the attainment of their independence, or—if it should be considered expedient to restore them to the domination of Spain or the empire—would take such precautions and lay down such conditions as would procure perfect tranquillity for them, and remove from the two allied kings the fear of a too absolute government by the house of Austria in those provinces.

It would be difficult to imagine a more impotent conclusion. Those Dutch rebels had not been fighting for tranquillity. The tranquillity of the rock amid raging waves—according to the device of the father of the republic—they had indeed maintained; but to exchange their turbulent and tragic existence, ever illumined by the great hope of freedom, for repose under one despot guaranteed to them by two others, was certainly not their aim. They lacked the breadth of vision enjoyed by the regenerators who sat upon mountain-tops.

They were fain to toil on in their own way. Perhaps, however, the future might show as large results from their work as from the schemes of those who were to begin the humiliation of the Austrian house by converting its ancient rebels into tranquil subjects.

The Marquis of Rosny, having distributed 60,000 crowns among the leading politicians and distinguished personages at the English court, with ample promises of future largess if they remained true to his master, took an affectionate farewell of King James, and returned with his noble two hundred to recount his triumphs to the impatient Henry. The treaty was soon afterwards duly signed and ratified by the high contracting parties. It was, however, for future history to register its results on the fate of pope, emperor, kings, potentates, and commonwealths, and to show the changes it would work in the geography, religion, and polity of the world.

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The deputies from the States-General, satisfied with the practical assistance promised them, soon afterwards took their departure with comparative cheerfulness, having previously obtained the royal consent to raise recruits in Scotland. Meantime the great Constable of Castile, ambassador from his Catholic Majesty, had arrived in London, and was wroth at all that he saw and all that he suspected. He, too, began to scatter golden arguments with a lavish hand among the great lords and statesmen of Britain, but found that the financier of France had, on the whole; got before him in the business, and was skilfully maintaining his precedence from the other side of the channel.

But the end of these great diplomatic manoeuvres had not yet come.

CHAPTER XLII.

Siege of Ostend—The Marquis Spinola made commander-in-chief of the besieging army—Discontent of the troops—General aspect of the operations—Gradual encroachment of the enemy.

The scene again shifts to Ostend. The Spanish cabinet, wearied of the slow progress of the siege, and not entirely satisfied with the generals, now concluded almost without consent of the archdukes, one of the most extraordinary jobs ever made, even in those jobbing days. The Marquis Spinola, elder brother of the ill-fated Frederic, and head of the illustrious Genoese family of that name, undertook to furnish a large sum of money which the wealth of his house and its connection with the great money-lenders of Genoa enabled him to raise, on condition that he should have supreme command of the operations against Ostend and of the foreign armies in the Netherlands. He was not a soldier, but he entered into a contract, by his own personal exertions both on the exchange and in the field, to reduce the city which had now resisted all the efforts of the archduke for more than two years. Certainly this was an experiment not often hazarded in warfare. The defence of Ostend was in the hands of the best and most seasoned fighting-men in Europe. The operations were under the constant supervision of the foremost captain of the age; for Maurice, in consultation with the States-General, received almost daily reports from the garrison, and regularly furnished advice and instructions as to their proceedings. He was moreover ever ready to take the field for a relieving campaign. Nothing was known of Spinola save that he was a high-born and very wealthy patrician who had reached his thirty-fourth year without achieving personal distinction of any kind, and who, during the previous summer, like so many other nobles from all parts of Europe, had thought it worth his while to drawl through a campaign or two in the Low Countries. It was the mode to do this, and it was rather a stigma upon any young man of family not to have been an occasional looker on at that perpetual military game. His brother Frederic, as already narrated; had tried his chance

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for fame and fortune in the naval service, and had lost his life in the adventure without achieving the one or the other. This was not a happy augury for the head of the family. Frederic had made an indifferent speculation. What could the brother hope by taking the field against Maurice of Nassau and Lewis William and the Baxes and Meetkerkes? Nevertheless the archduke eagerly accepted his services, while the Infanta, fully confident of his success before he had ordered a gun to be fired, protested that if Spinola did not take Ostend nobody would ever take it. There was also, strangely enough, a general feeling through the republican ranks that the long-expected man had come.

Thus a raw volunteer, a man who had never drilled a hundred men, who had never held an officer's commission in any army in the world, became, as by the waving of a wand, a field-marshal and commander-in-chief at a most critical moment in history, in the most conspicuous position in Christendom, and in a great war, now narrowed down to a single spot of earth, on which the eyes of the world were fixed, and the daily accounts from which were longed for with palpitating anxiety. What but failure and disaster could be expected from such astounding policy? Every soldier in the Catholic forces—from grizzled veterans of half a century who had commanded armies and achieved victories when this dainty young Italian was in his cradle, down to the simple musketeer or rider who had been campaigning for his daily bread ever since he could carry a piece or mount a horse was furious with discontent or outraged pride.

Very naturally too, it was said that the position of the archdukes had become preposterous. It was obvious, notwithstanding the pilgrimages of the Infanta to our Lady of Hall, to implore not only the fall of Ostend, but the birth of a successor to their sovereignty, that her marriage would for ever remain barren. Spain was already acting upon this theory, it was said, for the contract with Spinola was made, not at Brussels, but at Madrid, and a foreign army of Spaniards and Italians, under the supreme command of a Genoese adventurer, was now to occupy indefinitely that Flanders which had been proclaimed an independent nation, and duly bequeathed by its deceased proprietor to his daughter.

Ambrose Spinola, son of Philip, Marquis of Venafri, and his wife, Polyxena Grimaldi, was not appalled by the murmurs of hardly suppressed anger or public criticism. A handsome, aristocratic personage, with an intellectual, sad, but sympathetic face, fair hair and beard, and imposing but attractive presence—the young volunteer, at the beginning of October, made his first visit of inspection in the lines before Ostend. After studying the situation of affairs very thoroughly, he decided that the operations on the Gullet or eastern side, including Bucquoy's dike, with Pompey Targone's perambulatory castles and floating batteries, were of secondary importance.

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He doubted the probability of closing up a harbour, now open to the whole world and protected by the fleets of the first naval power of Europe, with wickerwork, sausages, and bridges upon barrels. His attention was at once concentrated on the western side, and he was satisfied that only by hard fighting and steady delving could he hope to master the place. To gain Ostend he would be obliged to devour it piecemeal as he went on.

Whatever else might be said of the new commander-in-chief, it was soon apparent that, although a volunteer and a patrician, he was no milksop. If he had been accustomed all his life to beds of down, he was as ready now to lie in the trenches, with a cannon for his pillow, as the most ironclad veteran in the ranks. He seemed to require neither sleep nor food, and his reckless habit of exposing himself to unnecessary danger was the subject of frequent animadversion on the part both of the archdukes and of the Spanish Government.

It was however in his case a wise temerity. The veterans whom he commanded needed no encouragement to daring deeds, but they required conviction as to the valour and zeal of their new commander, and this was afforded them in overflowing measure.

It is difficult to decide, after such a lapse of years, as to how much of the long series of daily details out of which this famous siege was compounded deserves to be recorded. It is not probable that for military history many of the incidents have retained vital importance. The world rang, at the beginning of the operations, with the skill and inventive talent of Targone, Giustiniani, and other Italian engineers, artificers, and pyrotechnists, and there were great expectations conceived of the effects to be produced by their audacious and original devices. But time wore on. Pompey's famous floating battery would not float, his moving monster battery would not move. With the one; the subtle Italian had intended to close up the Gullet to the States' fleets. It was to rest on the bottom at low water at the harbour's mouth, to rise majestically with the flood, and to be ever ready with a formidable broadside of fifty pounders against all comers. But the wild waves and tempests of the North Sea soon swept the ponderous toy into space, before it had fired a gun. The gigantic chariot, on which a moveable fort was constructed, was still more portentous upon paper than the battery. It was directed against that republican work, defending the Gullet, which was called in derision the Spanish Half-moon. It was to be drawn by forty horses, and armed with no man knew how many great guns, with a mast a hundred and fifty feet high in the centre of the fort, up and down which played pulleys raising and lowering a drawbridge long enough to span the Gullet.

It was further provided with anchors, which were to be tossed over the parapet of the doomed redoubt, while the assailants, thus grappled to the enemy's work, were to dash

over the bridge after having silenced the opposing fire by means of their own peripatetic battery.

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Unfortunately for the fame of Pompey, one of his many wheels was crushed on the first attempt to drag the chariot to the scene of anticipated triumph, the whole structure remained embedded in the sand, very much askew; nor did all the mules and horses that could be harnessed to it ever succeed in removing it an inch out of a position, which was anything but triumphant.

It seemed probable enough therefore that, so far as depended on the operations from the eastern side, the siege of Ostend, which had now lasted two years and three months, might be protracted for two years and three months longer. Indeed, Spinola at once perceived that if the archduke was ever to be put in possession of the place for which he had professed himself ready to wait eighteen years, it would be well to leave Bucquoy and Targone to build dykes and chariots and bury them on the east at their leisure, while more energy was brought to bear upon the line of fortifications of the west than had hitherto been employed. There had been shooting enough, bloodshed enough, suffering enough, but it was amazing to see the slight progress made. The occupation of what were called the external Squares has been described. This constituted the whole result of the twenty-seven months' work.

The town itself—the small and very insignificant kernel which lay enclosed in such a complicated series of wrappings and layers of defences—seemed as far off as if it were suspended in the sky. The old haven or canal, no longer navigable for ships, still served as an admirable moat which the assailants had not yet succeeded in laying entirely dry. It protected the counterscarp, and was itself protected by an exterior aeries of works, while behind the counterscarp was still another ditch, not so broad nor deep as the canal, but a formidable obstacle even after the counterscarp should be gained. There were nearly fifty forts and redoubts in these lines, of sufficient importance to have names which in those days became household words, not only in the Netherlands, but in Europe; the siege of Ostend being the one military event of Christendom, so long as it lasted. These names are of course as much forgotten now as those of the bastions before Nineveh. A very few of them will suffice to indicate the general aspect of the operations. On the extreme southwest of Ostend had been in peaceful times a polder — the general term to designate a pasture out of which the sea-water had been pumped—and the forts in that quarter were accordingly called by that name, as Polder Half-moon, Polder Ravelin, or great and little Polder Bulwark, as the case might be. Farther on towards the west, the north-west, and the north, and therefore towards the beach, were the West Ravelin, West Bulwark, Moses's Table, the Porcupine, the Hell's Mouth, the old church, and last and most important of all, the Sand Hill. The last-named work was protected by the Porcupine and Hell's Mouth, was the key to the whole series of fortifications, and was connected by a curtain with the old church, which was in the heart of the old town.

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Spinola had assumed command in October, but the winter was already closing in with its usual tempests and floods before there had been time for him to produce much effect. It seemed plain enough to the besieged that the object of the enemy would be to work his way through the Polder, and so gradually round to the Porcupine and the Sand Hill. Precisely in what directions his subterraneous passages might be tending, in what particular spot of the thin crust upon which they all stood an explosion might at any moment be expected, it was of course impossible to know. They were sure that the process of mining was steadily progressing, and Maurice sent orders to countermine under every bulwark, and to secretly isolate every bastion, so that it would be necessary for Spinola to make his way, fort by fort, and inch by inch.

Thus they struggled drearily about under ground, friend and foe, often as much bewildered as wanderers in the catacombs. To a dismal winter succeeded a ferocious spring. Both in February and March were westerly storms, such as had not been recorded even on that tempest-swept coast for twenty years, and so much damage was inflicted on the precious Sand Hill and its curtain, that, had the enemy been aware of its plight, it is probable that one determined assault might have put him in possession of the place. But Ostend was in charge of a most watchful governor, Peter van Gieselles, who had succeeded Charles van der Noot at the close of the year 1603. A plain, lantern jawed, Dutch colonel; with close-cropped hair, a long peaked beard, and an eye that looked as if it had never been shut; always dressed in a shabby old jerkin with tarnished flowers upon it, he took command with a stout but heavy heart, saying that the place should never be surrendered by him, but that he should never live to see the close of the siege. He lost no time in repairing the damages of the tempest, being ready to fight the west wind, the North Sea, and Spinola at any moment, singly or conjoined. He rebuilt the curtain of the Sand Hill, added fresh batteries to the Porcupine and Hell's Mouth, and amused and distracted the enemy with almost daily sorties and feints. His soldiers passed their days and nights up to the knees in mud and sludge and sea-water, but they saw that their commander never spared himself, and having a superfluity of food and drink, owing to the watchful care of the States-General, who sent in fleets laden with provisions faster than they could be consumed, they were cheerful and content.

On the 12th March there was a determined effort to carry the lesser Polder Bulwark. After a fierce and bloody action, the place was taken by storm, and the first success in the game was registered for Spinola. The little fort was crammed full of dead, but such of the defenders as survived were at last driven out of it, and forced to take refuge in the next work. Day after day the same bloody business was renewed,

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a mere monotony of assaults, repulses, sallies, in which hardly an inch of ground was gained on either side, except at the cost of a great pile of corpses. "Men will never know, nor can mortal pen ever describe," said one who saw it all, "the ferocity and the pertinacity of both besiegers and besieged." On the 15th of March, Colonel Catrice, an accomplished Walloon officer of engineers, commanding the approaches against the Polder, was killed. On the 21st March, as Peter Orieselles was taking his scrambling dinner in company with Philip Fleming, there was a report that the enemy was out again in force. A good deal of progress had been made during the previous weeks on the south-west and west, and more was suspected than was actually known. It was felt that the foe was steadily nibbling his way up to the counterscarp. Moreover, such was the emulation among the Germans, Walloons, Italians, and Spaniards for precedence in working across the canal, that a general assault and universal explosion were considered at any instant possible. The governor sent Fleming to see if all was right in the Porcupine, while he himself went to see if a new battery, which he had just established to check the approaches of the enemy towards the Polder Half-moon and Ravelin in a point very near the counterscarp, was doing its duty. Being, as usual, anxious to reconnoitre with his own eyes, he jumped upon the rampart. But there were sharp-shooters in the enemy's trenches, and they were familiar with the governor's rusty old doublet and haggard old face. Hardly had he climbed upon the breastwork when a ball pierced his heart, and he fell dead without a groan. There was a shout of triumph from the outside, while the tidings soon spread sadness through the garrison, for all loved and venerated the man. Philip Fleming, so soon as he learned the heavy news, lost no time in unavailing regrets, but instantly sent a courier to Prince Maurice; meantime summoning a council of superior officers, by whom Colonel John van Loon was provisionally appointed commandant.

A stately, handsome man, a good officer, but without extensive experience, he felt himself hardly equal to the immense responsibility of the post, but yielding to the persuasions of his comrades, proceeded to do his best. His first care was to secure the all-important Porcupine, towards which the enemy had been slowly crawling with his galleries and trenches. Four days after he had accepted the command he was anxiously surveying that fortification, and endeavouring to obtain a view of the enemy's works, when a cannon-ball struck him on the right leg, so that he died the next day. Plainly the post of commandant of Ostend was no sinecure. He was temporarily succeeded by Sergeant-Major Jacques de Bievry, but the tumults and confusion incident upon this perpetual change of head were becoming alarming. The enemy gave the garrison no rest night nor day, and it had long become evident that the young volunteer, whose name was so potent on the Genoa Exchange, was not a man of straw nor a dawdler, however the superseded veterans might grumble. At any rate the troops on either side were like to have their fill of work.

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On the 2nd April the Polder Ravelin was carried by storm. It was a most bloody action. Never were a few square feet of earth more recklessly assailed, more resolutely maintained. The garrison did not surrender the place, but they all laid down their lives in its defence. Scarcely an individual of them all escaped, and the foe, who paid dearly with heaps of dead and wounded for his prize, confessed that such serious work as this had scarce been known before in any part of that great slaughter-house, Flanders.

A few days later, Colonel Bievry, provisional commandant, was desperately wounded in a sortie, and was carried off to Zeeland. The States-General now appointed Jacques van der Meer, Baron of Berendrecht, to the post of honour and of danger. A noble of Flanders, always devoted to the republican cause; an experienced middle-aged officer, vigilant, energetic, nervous; a slight wiry man, with a wizened little face, large bright eyes, a meagre yellow beard, and thin sandy hair flowing down upon his well-starched ruff, the new governor soon showed himself inferior to none of his predecessors in audacity and alertness. It is difficult to imagine a more irritating position in many respects than that of commander in such an extraordinary leaguer. It was not a formal siege. Famine, which ever impends over an invested place, and sickens the soul with its nameless horrors, was not the great enemy to contend against here. Nor was there the hideous alternative between starving through obstinate resistance or massacre on submission, which had been the lot of so many Dutch garrisons in the earlier stages of the war. Retreat by sea was ever open to the Ostend garrison, and there was always an ample supply of the best provisions and of all munitions of war. But they had been unceasingly exposed to two tremendous enemies. During each winter and spring the ocean often smote their bastions and bulwarks in an hour of wrath till they fell together like children's toys, and it was always at work, night and day, steadily lapping at the fragile foundations on which all their structures stood. Nor was it easy to give the requisite attention to the devouring sea, because all the materials that could be accumulated seemed necessary to repair the hourly damages inflicted by their other restless foe.

Thus the day seemed to draw gradually but inexorably nearer when the place would be, not captured, but consumed. There was nothing for it, so long as the States were determined to hold the spot, but to meet the besieger at every point, above or below the earth, and sell every inch of that little morsel of space at the highest price that brave men could impose.

So Berendrecht, as vigilant and devoted as even Peter Gieselles had ever been, now succeeded to the care of the Polders and the Porcupines, and the Hell's Mouths; and all the other forts, whose quaint designations had served, as usually is the case among soldiers, to amuse the honest patriots in the midst of their toils and danger. On the 18th April, the enemy assailed the great western Ravelin, and after a sanguinary hand-to-hand action, in which great numbers of officers and soldiers were lost on both sides, he carried the fort; the Spaniards, Italians, Germans, and Walloons vieing with each other in deeds of extraordinary daring, and overcoming at last the resistance of the garrison.

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This was an important success. The foe had now worked his way with galleries and ditches along the whole length of the counterscarp till he was nearly up with the Porcupine, and it was obvious that in a few days he would be master of the counterscarp itself.

A less resolute commander, at the head of less devoted troops, might have felt that when that inevitable event should arrive all that honour demanded would have been done, and that Spinola was entitled to his city. Berendrecht simply decided that if the old counterscarp could no longer be held it was time to build a new counterscarp. This, too, had been for some time the intention of Prince Maurice. A plan for this work had already been sent into the place, and a distinguished English engineer, Ralph Dexter by name, arrived with some able assistants to carry it into execution. It having been estimated that the labour would take three weeks of time, without more ado the inner line was carefully drawn, cutting off with great nicety and precision about one half the whole place. Within this narrowed circle the same obstinate resistance was to be offered as before, and the bastions and redoubts of the new entrenchment were to be baptized with the same uncouth names which two long years of terrible struggle had made so precious. The work was very laborious; for the line was drawn straight through the town, and whole streets had to be demolished and the houses to their very foundations shovelled away. Moreover the men were forced to toil with spade in one hand and matchlock in the other, ever ready to ascend from the ancient dilapidated cellars in order to mount the deadly breach at any point in the whole circumference of the place.

It became absolutely necessary therefore to send a sufficient force of common workmen into the town to lighten the labours of the soldiers. Moreover the thought, although whistled to the wind, would repeatedly recur, that, after all, there must be a limit to these operations, and that at last there would remain no longer any earth in which to find a refuge.

The work of the new entrenchment went slowly on, but it was steadily done. Meantime they were comforted by hearing that the stadholder had taken the field in Flanders, at the head of a considerable force, and they lived in daily expectation of relief. It will be necessary, at the proper moment, to indicate the nature of Prince Maurice's operations. For the present, it is better that the reader should confine his attention within the walls of Ostend.

By the 11th May, the enemy had effected a lodgment in a corner of the Porcupine, and already from that point might threaten the new counterscarp before it should be completed. At the same time he had gnawed through to the West Bulwark, and was busily mining under the Porcupine itself. In this fort friend and foe now lay together, packed like herrings, and profited by their proximity to each other to vary the monotony of pike and anaphance with an occasional encounter of epistolary wit.

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Thus Spanish letters, tied to sticks, and tossed over into the next entrenchment, were replied to by others, composed in four languages by the literary man of Ostend, Auditor Fleming, and shot into the enemy's trenches on cross-bow bolts.

On the 29th May, a long prepared mine was sprung beneath the Porcupine. It did its work effectively, and the 29 May assailants did theirs no less admirably, crowding into the breach with headlong ferocity, and after a long and sanguinary struggle with immense loss on both sides, carrying the precious and long-coveted work by storm. Inch by inch the defenders were thus slowly forced back toward their new entrenchment. On the same day, however, they inflicted a most bloody defeat upon the enemy in an attempt to carry the great Polder. He withdrew, leaving heaps of slain, so that the account current for the day would have balanced itself, but that the Porcupine, having changed hands, now bristled most formidably against its ancient masters. The daily 'slaughter had become sickening to behold. There were three thousand effective men in the garrison. More could have been sent in to supply the steady depletion in the ranks, but there was no room for more. There was scarce space enough for the living to stand to their work, or for the dead to lie in their graves. And this was an advantage which could not fail to tell. Of necessity the besiegers would always very far outnumber the garrison, so that the final success of their repeated assaults became daily more and more possible.

Yet on the 2nd June the enemy met not only with another signal defeat, but also with a most bitter surprise. On that day the mine which he had been so long and so laboriously constructing beneath the great Polder Bulwark was sprung with magnificent effect. A breach, forty feet wide, was made in this last stronghold of the old defences, and the soldiers leaped into the crater almost before it had ceased to blaze, expecting by one decisive storm to make themselves masters at last of all the fortifications, and therefore of the town itself. But as emerging from the mine, they sprang exulting upon the shattered bulwark, a transformation more like a sudden change in some holiday pantomime than a new fact in this three years' most tragic siege presented itself to their astonished eyes. They had carried the last defence of the old counterscarp, and behold—a new one, which they had never dreamed of, bristling before their eyes, with a flanking battery turned directly upon them. The musketeers and pikemen, protected by their new works, now thronged towards the assailants; giving them so hearty a welcome that they reeled back, discomfited, after a brief but severe struggle, from the spot of their anticipated triumph, leaving their dead and dying in the breach.

Four days later, Berendrecht, with a picked party of English troops, stole out for a reconnaissance, not wishing to trust other eyes than his own in the imminent peril of the place.

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The expedition was successful. A few prisoners were taken, and valuable information was obtained, but these advantages were counterbalanced by a severe disaster. The vigilant and devoted little governor, before effecting his entrance into the sally port, was picked off by a sharpshooter, and died the next day. This seemed the necessary fate of the commandants of Ostend, where the operations seemed more like a pitched battle lasting three years than an ordinary siege. Gieselles, Van Loon, Bievry, and now Berendrecht, had successively fallen at the post of duty since the beginning of the year. Not one of them was more sincerely deplored than Berendrecht. His place was supplied by Colonel Uytenhoove, a stalwart, hirsute, hard-fighting Dutchman, the descendant of an ancient race, and seasoned in many a hard campaign.

The enemy now being occupied in escarping and furnishing with batteries the positions he had gained, with the obvious intention of attacking the new counterscarp, it was resolved to prepare for the possible loss of this line of fortifications by establishing another and still narrower one within it.

Half the little place had been shorn away by the first change. Of the half which was still in possession of the besieged about one-third was now set off, and in this little corner of earth, close against the new harbour, was set up their last refuge. They called the new citadel Little Troy, and announced, with pardonable bombast, that they would hold out there as long as the ancient Trojans had defended Ilium. With perfect serenity the engineers set about their task with line, rule, and level, measuring out the bulwarks and bastions, the miniature salients, half-moons, and ditches, as neatly and methodically as if there were no ceaseless cannonade in their ears, and as if the workmen were not at every moment summoned to repel assaults upon the outward wall. They sent careful drawings of Little Troy to Maurice and the States, and received every encouragement to persevere, together with promises of ultimate relief.

But there was one serious impediment to the contemplated construction of the new earth-works. They had no earth. Nearly everything solid had been already scooped away in the perpetual delving. The sea-dykes had been robbed of their material, so that the coming winter might find besiegers and besieged all washed together into the German Ocean, and it was hard digging and grubbing among the scanty cellarages of the dilapidated houses. But there were plenty of graves, filled with the results of three years' hard fighting. And now, not only were all the cemeteries within the precincts shovelled and carted in mass to the inner fortifications, but rewards being offered of ten stivers for each dead body, great heaps of disinterred soldiers were piled into the new ramparts. Thus these warriors, after laying down their lives for the cause of freedom, were made to do duty after death. Whether it were just or no thus to disturb the repose—if repose it could be called—of the dead that they might once more protect the living, it can scarcely be doubted that they took ample revenge on the already sufficiently polluted atmosphere.

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On the 17th June the foe sprang a mine under the western bulwark; close to a countermine exploded by the garrison the day before. The assailants thronged as merrily as usual to the breach, and were met with customary resolution by the besieged; Governor Uytenhoove, clad in complete armour, leading his troops. The enemy, after an hour's combat, was repulsed with heavy loss, but the governor fell in the midst of the fight. Instantly he was seized by the legs by a party of his own men, some English desperadoes among the number, who, shouting that the colonel was dead, were about to render him the last offices by plundering his body. The ubiquitous Fleming, observing the scene, flew to the rescue and, with the assistance of a few officers, drove off these energetic friends, and taking off the governor's casque, discovered that he still breathed. That he would soon have ceased to do so, had he been dragged much farther in his harness over that jagged and precipitous pile of rubbish, was certain. He was desperately wounded, and of course incapacitated for his post. Thus, in that year, before the summer solstice, a fifth commandant had fallen.

On the same day, simultaneously with this repulse in the West Bulwark, the enemy made himself at last completely master of the Polder. Here, too, was a savage hand-to-hand combat with broadswords and pikes, and when the pikes were broken, with great clubs and stakes pulled from the fascines; but the besiegers were victorious, and the defenders sullenly withdrew with their wounded to the inner entrenchments.

On the 27th June, Daniel de Hartaing, Lord of Marquette, was sent by the States-General to take command in Ostend. The colonel of the Walloon regiment which had rendered such good service on the famous field of Nieuport, the new governor, with his broad, brown, cheerful face, and his Milan armour, was a familiar figure enough to the campaigners on both sides in Flanders or Germany.

The stoutest heart might have sunk at the spectacle which the condition of the town presented at his first inspection. The States-General were resolved to hold the place, at all hazards, and Marquette had come to do their bidding, but it was difficult to find anything that could be called a town. The great heaps of rubbish, which had once been the outer walls, were almost entirely in the possession of the foe, who had lodged himself in all that remained of the defiant Porcupine, the Hell's Mouth, and other redoubts, and now pointed from them at least fifty great guns against their inner walls. The old town, with its fortifications, was completely honeycombed, riddled, knocked to pieces, and, although the Sand Hill still held out, it was plain enough that its days were numbered unless help should soon arrive. In truth, it required a clear head and a practised eye to discover among those confused masses of prostrate masonry, piles of brick, upturned graves, and mounds of sand and rubbish, anything like order

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and regularity. Yet amid the chaos there was really form and meaning to those who could read aright, and Marquette saw, as well in the engineers' lines as in the indomitable spirit that looked out of the grim faces of the garrison, that Ostend, so long as anything of it existed in nature, could be held for the republic. Their brethren had not been firmer, when keeping their merry Christmas, seven years before, under the North Pole, upon a pudding made of the gunner's cartridge paste, or the Knights of the Invincible Lion in the horrid solitudes of Tierra del Fuego, than were the defenders of this sandbank.

Whether the place were worth the cost or not, it was for my lords the States-General to decide, not for Governor Marquette. And the decision of those "high and mighty" magistrates, to whom even Maurice of Nassau bowed without a murmur, although often against his judgment, had been plainly enough announced.

And so shiploads of deals and joists, bricks, nails, and fascines, with requisite building materials, were sent daily in from Zeeland, in order that Little Troy might be completed; and, with God's help, said the garrison, the republic shall hold its own.

And now there were two months more of mining and countermining, of assaults and repulses, of cannonading and hand-to-hand fights with pikes and clubs. Nearer and nearer, day by day, and inch by inch, the foe had crawled up to the verge of their last refuge, and the walls of Little Troy, founded upon fresh earth and dead men's bones, and shifting sands, were beginning to quake under the guns of the inexorable volunteer from Genoa. Yet on the 27th August there was great rejoicing in the beleaguered town. Cannon thundered salutes, bonfires blazed, trumpets rang jubilant blasts, and, if the church-bells sounded no merry peals, it was because the only church in the place had been cut off in the last slicing away by the engineers. Hymns of thanksgiving ascended to heaven, and the whole garrison fell on their knees, praying fervently to Almighty God, with devout and grateful hearts. It was not an ignoble spectacle to see those veterans kneeling where there was scarce room to kneel, amid ruin and desolation, to praise the Lord for his mercies. But to explain this general thanksgiving it is now necessary for a moment to go back.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Began to scatter golden arguments with a lavish hand
Certain number of powers, almost exactly equal to each other
Conceit, and procrastination which marked the royal character
Do you want peace or war? I am ready for either
Eloquence of the biggest guns
Even the virtues of James were his worst enemies



Gold was the only passkey to justice
If to do be as grand as to imagine what it were good to do
It is certain that the English hate us (Sully)
Logic of the largest battalions
Made peace—and had been at war ever since

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Nations tied to the pinafores of children in the nursery
Natural tendency to suspicion of a timid man
Not safe for politicians to call each other hard names
One of the most contemptible and mischievous of kings (James I)
Peace founded on the only secure basis, equality of strength
Peace seemed only a process for arriving at war
Repose under one despot guaranteed to them by two others
Requires less mention than Philip III himself
Rules adopted in regard to pretenders to crowns
Served at their banquets by hosts of lackeys on their knees
Take all their imaginations and extravagances for truths
The expenses of James's household
The pigmy, as the late queen had been fond of nicknaming him
To negotiate with Government in England was to bribe
Unproductive consumption being accounted most sagacious
War was the normal condition of Christians
We have been talking a little bit of truth to each other
What was to be done in this world and believed as to the next
You must show your teeth to the Spaniard

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