

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1605-07 eBook

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1605-07 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

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History of the United Netherlands, 1605-1607

CHAPTER XLV.

Preparations for the campaign of 1606—Diminution of Maurice's popularity—Quarrel between the pope and the Venetian republic— Surprise of Sluys by Du Terrail— Dilatoriness of the republic's operations—Movements of Spinola—Influence of the weather on the military transactions of the year—Endeavours of Spinola to obtain possession of the Waal and Yssel—Surrender of Lochem to Spinola— Siege of Groll— Siege and loss of Rheinberg—Mutiny in the Catholic army—Recovery of Lochem by Maurice—Attempted recovery of Groll— Sudden appearance of the enemy— Withdrawal of the besieging army Close of the campaign—End of the war of independence—Motives of the Prince in his actions before Groll—Cruise of Admiral Haultain to the coast of Spain and Portugal—His encounter with the war— ships of



Fazardo—Courageous conduct of the vice-admiral—Deaths of Justus Lipsius, Hohenlo, and Count John of Nassau.

After the close of the campaign of 1605 Spinola had gone once more to Spain. On his passage through Paris he had again been received with distinguished favour by that warm ally of the Dutch republic, Henry IV., and on being questioned by that monarch as to his plans for the next campaign had replied that he intended once more to cross the Rhine, and invade Friesland. Henry, convinced that the Genoese would of course not tell him the truth on such an occasion, wrote accordingly to the States-General that they might feel safe as to their eastern frontier. Whatever else might happen, Friesland and the regions adjacent would be safe next year from attack. The immediate future was to show whether the subtle Italian had not compassed as neat a deception by telling the truth as coarser politicians could do by falsehood.



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Spinola found the royal finances in most dismal condition. Three hundred thousand dollars a month were the least estimate of the necessary expenses for carrying on the Netherland war, a sum which could not possibly be spared by Lerma, Uceda, the Marquis of the Seven Churches, and other financiers then industriously occupied in draining dry the exchequer for their own uses. Once more the general aided his sovereign with purse and credit, as well as with his sword. Once more the exchange at Genoa was glutted with the acceptances of Marquis Spinola. Here at least was a man of a nature not quite so depraved as that of the parasites bred out of the corruption of a noble but dying commonwealth, and doubtless it was with gentle contempt that the great favourite and his friends looked at the military and financial enthusiasm of the volunteer. It was so much more sagacious to make a princely fortune than to sacrifice one already inherited, in the service of one's country.

Spinola being thus ready not only to fight but to help to pay for the fighting, found his plans of campaigns received with great benignity by the king and his ministers. Meantime there was much delay. The enormous labours thus devolved upon one pair of shoulders by the do-nothing king and a mayor of the palace whose soul was absorbed by his own private robberies, were almost too much for human strength. On his return to the Netherlands Spinola fell dangerously ill in Genoa.

Meantime, during his absence and the enforced idleness of the Catholic armies, there was an opportunity for the republicans to act with promptness and vigour. They displayed neither quality. Never had there been so much sluggishness as in the preparations for the campaign of 1606. The States' exchequer was lower than it had been for years. The republic was without friends. Left to fight their battle for national existence alone, the Hollanders found themselves perpetually subjected to hostile censure from their late allies, and to friendly advice still more intolerable. There were many brave Englishmen and Frenchmen sharing in the fatigues of the Dutch war of independence, but the governments of Henry and of James were as protective, as severely virtuous, as offensive, and, in their secret intrigues with the other belligerent, as mischievous as it was possible for the best-intentioned neutrals to be.

The fame and the popularity of the stadholder had been diminished by the results of the past campaign. The States-General were disappointed, dissatisfied, and inclined to censure very unreasonably the public servant who had always obeyed their decrees with docility. While Henry IV. was rapidly transferring his admiration from Maurice to Spinola, the disagreements at home between the Advocate and the Stadholder were becoming portentous.

There was a want of means and of soldiers for the new campaign. Certain causes were operating in Europe to the disadvantage of both belligerents. In the south, Venice had almost drawn her sword against the pope in her settled resolution to put down the Jesuits and to clip the wings of the church party, before, with bequests and donations,

votive churches and magnificent monasteries, four-fifths of the domains of the republic should fall into mortmain, as was already the case in Brabant.

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Naturally there was a contest between the ex-Huguenot, now eldest son of the Church, and the most Catholic king, as to who should soonest defend the pope. Henry offered thorough protection to his Holiness, but only under condition that he should have a monopoly of that protection. He lifted his sword, but meantime it was doubtful whether the blow was to descend upon Venice or upon Spain. The Spanish levies, on their way to the Netherlands, were detained in Italy by this new exigency. The States-General offered the sister republic their maritime assistance, and notwithstanding their own immense difficulties, stood ready to send a fleet to the Mediterranean. The offer was gratefully declined, and the quarrel with the pope arranged, but the incident laid the foundation of a lasting friendship between the only two important republics then existing. The issue of the Gunpowder Plot, at the close of the preceding year, had confirmed James in his distaste for Jesuits, and had effected that which all the eloquence of the States-General and their ambassador had failed to accomplish, the prohibition of Spanish enlistments in his kingdom. Guido Fawkes had served under the archduke in Flanders.

Here then were delays additional to that caused by Spinola's illness. On the other hand, the levies of the republic were for a season paralysed by the altercation, soon afterwards adjusted, between Henry IV. and the Duke of Bouillon, brother-in-law of the stadholder and of the Palatine, and by the petty war between the Duke and Hanseatic city of Brunswick, in which Ernest of Nassau was for a time employed.

During this period of almost suspended animation the war gave no signs of life, except in a few spasmodic efforts on the part of the irrepressible Du Terrail. Early in the spring, not satisfied with his double and disastrous repulse before Bergen-op-Zoom, that partisan now determined to surprise Sluy's. That an attack was impending became known to the governor of that city, the experienced Colonel Van der Noot. Not dreaming, however, that any mortal—even the most audacious of Frenchmen and adventurers—would ever think of carrying a city like Sluy's by surprise, defended as it was by a splendid citadel and by a whole chain of forts and water-batteries, and capable of withstanding three months long, as it had so recently done, a siege in form by the acknowledged master of the beleaguering science, the methodical governor event calmly to bed one fine night in June. His slumbers were disturbed before morning by the sound of trumpets sounding Spanish melodies in the streets, and by a great uproar and shouting. Springing out of bed, he rushed half-dressed to the rescue. Less vigilant than Paul Bax had been the year before in Bergen, he found that Du Terrail had really effected a surprise. At the head of twelve hundred Walloons and Irishmen, that enterprising officer had waded through the drowned land of Cadzand, with the promised support of a body of infantry under Frederic Van den Berg, from Damm, had stolen noiselessly by the forts of that island unchallenged and unseen, had effected with petards a small breach through the western gate of the city, and with a large number of his followers, creeping two and two through the gap, had found himself for a time master of Sluys.

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The profound silence of the place had however somewhat discouraged the intruders. The whole population were as sound asleep as was the excellent commandant, but the stillness in the deserted streets suggested an ambush, and they moved stealthily forward, feeling their way with caution towards the centre of the town.

It so happened, moreover, that the sacristan had forgotten to wind up the great town clock. The agreement with the party first entering and making their way to the opposite end of the city, had been that at the striking of a certain hour after midnight they should attack simultaneously and with a great outcry all the guardhouses, so that the garrison might be simultaneously butchered. The clock never struck, the signal was never given, and Du Terrail and his immediate comrades remained near the western gate, suspicious and much perplexed. The delay was fatal. The guard, the whole garrison, and the townspeople flew to arms, and half-naked, but equipped with pike and musket, and led on by Van der Noot in person, fell upon the intruders. A panic took the place of previous audacity in the breasts of Du Terrail's followers. Thinking only of escape, they found the gap by which they had crept into the town much less convenient as a means of egress in the face of an infuriated multitude. Five hundred of them were put to death in a very few minutes. Almost as many were drowned or suffocated in the marshes, as they attempted to return by the road over which they had come. A few stragglers June, of the fifteen hundred were all that were left to tell the tale.

It would seem scarcely worth while to chronicle such trivial incidents in this great war—the all-absorbing drama of Christendom—were it not that they were for the moment the whole war. It might be thought that hostilities were approaching their natural termination, and that the war was dying of extreme old age, when the Quixotic pranks of a Du Terrail occupied so large a part of European attention.

The winter had passed, another spring had come and gone, and Maurice had in vain attempted to obtain sufficient means from the States to take the field in force. Henry, looking on from the outside, was becoming more and more exasperated with the dilatoriness which prevented the republic from profiting by the golden moments of Spinola's enforced absence. Yet the best that could be done seemed to be to take measures for defensive operations.

Spinola never reached Brussels until the beginning of June, yet, during all the good campaigning weather which had been fleeting away, not a blow had been struck, nor a wholesome counsel taken by the stadholder or the States. It was midsummer before the armies were in the field. The plans of the Catholic general however then rapidly developed themselves. Having assembled as large a force as had ever been under his command, he now divided it into two nearly equal portions. Bucquoy, with ten thousand foot,



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twelve hundred cavalry, and twelve guns, arrived on the 18th July at Nook, on the Meuse. Spinola, with eleven thousand infantry, two thousand horse, and eight guns, crossed the Rhine at the old redoubts of Ruhrort, and on the same 18th July took position at Goor, in Overijssel. The first plan of the commander-in-chief was to retrace exactly his campaign of the previous year, even as he had with so much frankness stated to Henry. But the republic, although deserted by her former friends, and looked upon askance by the monarch of Britain, and by the most Christian king, had this year a most efficient ally in the weather. Jupiter Pluvius had descended from on high to the rescue of the struggling commonwealth, and his decrees were omnipotent as to the course of the campaign. The seasons that year seemed all fused into one. It was difficult to tell on midsummer day whether it were midwinter, spring, or autumn. The rain came down day after day, week after week, as if the contending armies and the very country which was to be invaded and defended were to be all washed out of existence together. Friesland resolved itself into a vast quagmire; the roads became fluid, the rivers lakes. Spinola turned his face from the east, and proceeded to carry out a second plan which he had long meditated, and even a more effective one, in the west.

The Waal and the Yssel formed two sides of a great quadrilateral; and furnished for the natural fortress, thus enclosed, two vast and admirable moats. Within lay Good-meadow and Foul-meadow—Bet-uwe and Vel-uwe—one, the ancient Batavian island which from time immemorial had given its name to the commonwealth, the other, the once dismal swamp which toil and intelligence had in the course of centuries transformed into the wealthy and flowery land of Gueldres.

Beyond, but in immediate proximity, lay the ancient episcopal city and province of Utrecht, over which lay the road to the adjacent Holland and Zeeland. The very heart of the republic would be laid bare to the conqueror's sword if he could once force the passage, and obtain the control of these two protecting streams. With Utrecht as his base, and all Brabant and Flanders—obedient provinces—at his back, Spinola might accomplish more in one season than Alva, Don John, and Alexander Farnese had compassed in forty years, and destroy at a blow what was still called the Netherland rebellion. The passage of the rivers once effected, the two enveloping wings would fold themselves together, and the conquest would be made.

Thus reasoned the brilliant young general, and his projects, although far-reaching, did not seem wild. The first steps were, however, the most important as well as the most difficult, and he had to reckon with a wary and experienced antagonist. Maurice had at last collected and reviewed at Arnhem an army of nearly fifteen thousand men, and was now watching closely from Doesburg and Deventer every movement of the foe.



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Having been forced to a defensive campaign, in which he was not likely at best to gain many additional laurels, he was the more determined to lay down his own life, and sacrifice every man he could bring into the field, before Spinola should march into the cherished domains of Utrecht and Holland. Meantime the rain, which had already exerted so much influence on the military movements of the year, still maintained the supremacy over human plans. The Yssel and the Waal, always deep, broad, sluggish, but dangerous rivers—the Rhine in its old age—were swollen into enormous proportions, their currents flowing for the time with the vigour of their far away youth.

Maurice had confided the defence of the Waal to Warner Du Bois, under whose orders he placed a force of about seven thousand men, and whose business it was to prevent Bucquoy's passage. His own task was to baffle Spinola.

Bucquoy's ambition was to cross the Waal at a point as near as possible to the fork of that stream with the true Rhine, seize the important city of Nymegen, and then give the hand to Spinola, so soon as he should be on the other side of the Yssel. At the village of Spardorp or Kekerdorp, he employed Pompeo Giustiniani to make a desperate effort, having secured a large number of barges in which he embarked his troops. As the boatmen neared the opposite bank, however, they perceived that Warner Du Bois had made effective preparations for their reception. They lost heart, and, on pretence that the current of the river was too rapid to allow them to reach the point proposed for their landing, gradually dropped down the stream, and, in spite of the remonstrances of the commanders, pushed their way back to the shore which they had left. From that time forth, the States' troops, in efficient numbers, fringed the inner side of the Waal, along the whole length of the Batavian island, while armed vessels of the republic patrolled the stream itself. In vain Count Bucquoy watched an opportunity, either by surprise or by main strength, to effect a crossing. The Waal remained as impassable as if it were a dividing ocean.

On the other side of the quadrilateral, Maurice's dispositions were as effective as those of his lieutenant on the Waal. The left shore of the Yssel, along its whole length, from Arnhem and Doesburg quite up to Zwoll and Campen, where the river empties itself into the Zuyder Zee, was now sprinkled thickly with forts, hastily thrown up, but strong enough to serve the temporary purpose of the stadholder. In vain the fleet-footed and audacious Spinola moved stealthily or fiercely to and fro, from one point to another, seeking an opening through which to creep, or a weak spot where he might dash himself against the chain. The whole line was securely guarded. The swollen river, the redoubts, and the musketeers of Maurice, protected the heart of the republic from the impending danger.



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Wearied of this fruitless pacing up and down, Spinola, while apparently intending an assault upon Deventer, and thus attracting his adversary's attention to that important city, suddenly swerved to the right, and came down upon Lochem. The little town, with its very slender garrison, surrendered at once. It was not a great conquest, but it might possibly be of use in the campaign. It was taken before the stadholder could move a step to its assistance, even had he deemed it prudent to leave Yssel-side for an hour. The summer was passing away, the rain was still descending, and it was the 1st of August before Spinola left Lochem. He then made a rapid movement to the north, between Zwoll and Hasselt, endeavouring to cross the Blackwater, and seize Geelmuyden, on the Zuyder Zee. Had he succeeded, he might have turned Maurice's position. But the works in that direction had been entrusted to an experienced campaigner, Warmelo, sheriff of Zalant, who received the impetuous Spinola and his lieutenant, Count Solre, so warmly, that they reeled backwards at last, after repeated assaults and great loss of men, and never more attempted to cross the Yssel.

Obviously, the campaign had failed. Utrecht and Holland were as far out of the Catholic general's reach as the stars in the sky, but at least, with his large armies, he could earn a few trophies, barren or productive, as it might prove, before winter, uniting with the deluge, should drive him from the field.

On the 3rd August, he laid siege to Groll (or Groenlo), a fortified town of secondary importance in the country of Zutphen, and, squandering his men with much recklessness, in his determination not to be baffled, reduced the place in eleven days. Here he paused for a breathing spell, and then, renouncing all his schemes upon the inner defences of the republic, withdrew once more to the Rhine and laid siege to Rheinberg.

This frontier place had been tossed to and fro so often between the contending parties in the perpetual warfare, that its inhabitants must have learned to consider themselves rather as a convenient circulating medium for military operations than as burghers who had any part in the ordinary business of life. It had old-fashioned defences of stones which, during the recent occupation by the States, had been much improved, and had been strengthened with earthworks.

Before it was besieged, Maurice sent his brother Frederic Henry, with some picked companies, into the place, so that the garrison amounted to three thousand effective men.

The Prince de Soubise, brother of the Duc de Rohan, and other French volunteers of quality, also threw themselves into the place, in order to take lessons in the latest methods of attack and defence. It was now admitted that no more accomplished pupil of the stadholder in the beleaguering art had appeared in Europe than his present formidable adversary. On this occasion, however, there was no great display of science. Maurice obstinately refused to move to the relief of the place, despite all the

efforts of a deputation of the States-General who visited his camp in September, urging him strenuously to take the chances of a stricken field.



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Nothing could induce the stadholder, who held an observing position at Wesel, with his back against the precious watery quadrilateral, to risk the defence of those most vital lines of the Yssel and the Waal. While attempting to save Rheinberg, he felt it possible that he might lose Nymegen, or even Utrecht. The swift but wily Genoese was not to be trifled with or lost sight of an instant. The road to Holland might still be opened, and the destiny of the republic might hang on the consequences of a single false move. That destiny, under God, was in his hands alone, and no chance of winning laurels, even from his greatest rival's head, could induce him to shrink from the path of duty, however obscure it might seem. There were a few brilliant assaults and sorties, as in all sieges, the French volunteers especially distinguishing themselves; but the place fell at the end of forty days. The garrison marched out with the honours of war. In the modern practice, armies were rarely captured in strongholds, nor were the defenders, together with the population, butchered.

The loss, after a six weeks' siege, of Rheinberg, which six years before, with far inferior fortifications, had held out a much longer time against the States, was felt as a bitter disappointment throughout the republic. Frederic Henry, on leaving the place, made a feeble and unsuccessful demonstration against Yenlo, by which the general dissatisfaction was not diminished. Soon afterwards, the war became more languid than ever. News arrived of a great crisis on the Genoa exchange. A multitude of merchants, involved in pecuniary transactions with Spinola, fell with one tremendous crash. The funds of the Catholic commander-in-chief were already exhausted, his acceptances could no longer be negotiated.

His credit was becoming almost as bad as the king's own. The inevitable consequence of the want of cash and credit followed. Mutiny, for the first time in Spinola's administration, raised its head once more, and stalked about defiant. Six hundred veterans marched to Breda, and offered their services to Justinus of Nassau. The proposal was accepted. Other bands, established their quarters in different places, chose their Elettos and lesser officers, and enacted the scenes which have been so often depicted in these pages. The splendid army of Spinola melted like April snow. By the last week of October there hardly seemed a Catholic army in the field. The commander-in-chief had scattered such companies as could still be relied upon in the villages of the friendly arch-episcopate of Cologne, and had obtained, not by murders and blackmail— according to the recent practice of the Admiral of Arragon, at whose grim name the whole country-side still shuddered—but from the friendship of the leading inhabitants and by honest loans, a sufficient sum to put bread into the mouths of the troops still remaining faithful to him.

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The opportunity had at last arrived for the stadholder to strike a blow before the season closed. Bankruptcy and mutiny had reduced his enemy to impotence in the very season of his greatest probable success. On the 24th October Maurice came before Lochem, which he recaptured in five days. Next in the order of Spinola's victories was Groll, which the stadholder at once besieged. He had almost fifteen thousand infantry and three thousand horse. A career of brief triumph before winter should close in upon those damping fields, seemed now assured. But the rain, which during nearly the whole campaign had been his potent ally, had of late been playing him false. The swollen Yssel, during a brief period of dry weather, had sunk so low in certain shallows as not to be navigable for his transports, and after his trains of artillery and munitions had been dragged wearily overland as far as Groll, the deluge had returned in such force, that physical necessity as well as considerations of humanity compelled him to defer his entrenching operations until the weather should moderate. As there seemed no further danger to be apprehended from the broken, mutinous, and dispersed forces of the enemy, the siege operations were conducted in a leisurely manner. What was the astonishment, therefore, among the soldiers, when a rumour flew about the camp in the early days of November that the indomitable Spinola was again advancing upon them! It was perfectly true. With extraordinary perseverance he had gathered up six or seven thousand infantry and twelve companies of horse—all the remnants of the splendid armies with which he had taken the field at midsummer—and was now marching to the relief of Groll, besieged as it was by a force at least doubly as numerous as his own. It was represented to the stadholder, however, that an impassable morass lay between him and the enemy, and that there would therefore be time enough to complete his entrenchments before Spinola could put his foolhardy attempt into execution. But the Catholic general, marching faster than rumour itself, had crossed the impracticable swamp almost before a spadeful of earth had been turned in the republican camp. His advance was in sight even while the incredulous were sneering at the absurdity of his supposed project. Informed by scouts of the weakest point in the stadholder's extended lines, Spinola was directing himself thither with beautiful precision. Maurice hastily contracted both his wings, and concentrated himself in the village of Lebel. At last the moment had come for a decisive struggle. There could be little doubt of the result. All the advantage was with the republican army. The Catholics had arrived in front of the enemy fatigued by forced marches through quagmires, in horrible weather, over roads deemed impassable. The States' troops were fresh, posted on ground of their own choosing, and partially entrenched. To the astonishment, even to the horror of the most eager portion of the army, the stadholder deliberately, and despite the groans of his soldiers, refused the combat, and gave immediate orders for raising the siege and abandoning the field.

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On the 12th of November he broke up his camp and withdrew to a village called Zelem. On the same day the marquis, having relieved the city, without paying the expected price, retired in another direction, and established what was left of his army in the province of Munster. The campaign was closed. And thus the great war which had run its stormy course for nearly forty years, dribbled out of existence, sinking away that rainy November in the dismal fens of Zutphen. The long struggle for independence had come, almost unperceived, to an end.

Peace had not arrived, but the work of the armies was over for many a long year. Freedom and independence were secured. A deed or two, never to be forgotten by Netherland hearts, was yet to be done on the ocean, before the long and intricate negotiations for peace should begin, and the weary people permit themselves to rejoice; but the prize was already won.

Meantime, the conduct of Prince Maurice in these last days of the campaign was the subject of biting censure by friend and foe. The military fame of Spinola throughout Europe grew apace; and the fame of his great rival seemed to shrink in the same proportion.

Henry of France was especially indignant at what he considered the shortcomings of the republic and of its chief. Already, before the close of the summer, the agent Aerssens had written from Paris that his Majesty was very much displeased with Spinola's prosperity, ascribing it to the want of good councils on the part of the States' Government that so fine an army should lie idle so long, without making an attempt to relieve the beleaguered places, so that Spinola felt assured of taking anything as soon as he made his appearance. "Your Mightinesses cannot believe," continued the agent, "what a trophy is made by the Spanish ministers out of these little exploits, and they have so much address at this court, that if such things continue they may produce still greater results."

In December he wrote that the king was so malcontent concerning the siege of Groll as to make it impossible to answer him with arguments, that he openly expressed regret at not having employed the money lent to the States upon strengthening his own frontiers, so distrustful was he of their capacity for managing affairs, and that he mentioned with disgust statements received from his ambassador at Brussels and from the Duc de Rohan, to the effect that Spinola had between five and six thousand men only at the relief of Groll, against twelve thousand in the stadholder's army.

The motives of the deeds and the omissions of the prince at this supreme moment must be pondered with great caution. The States-General had doubtless been inclined for vigorous movements, and Olden-Barneveld, with some of his colleagues, had visited the camp late in September to urge the relief of Rheinberg. Maurice was in daily correspondence with the Government, and regularly demanded their advice, by which,

on many former occasions, he had bound himself, even when it was in conflict with his own better judgment.



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But throughout this campaign, the responsibility was entirely, almost ostentatiously, thrown by the States-General upon their commander-in-chief, and, as already indicated, their preparations in the spring and early summer had been entirely inadequate. Should he lose the army with which he had so quietly but completely checked Spinola in all his really important moves during the summer and autumn, he might despair of putting another very soon into the field. That his force in that November week before Groll was numerically far superior to the enemy is certain, but he had lost confidence in his cavalry since their bad behaviour at Mulheim the previous year, and a very large proportion of his infantry was on the sick-list at the moment of Spinola's approach. "Lest the continual bad weather should entirely consume the army," he said, "we are resolved, within a day or two after we have removed the sick who are here in great numbers, to break up, unless the enemy should give us occasion to make some attempt upon him."

Maurice was the servant of a small republic, contending single-handed against an empire still considered the most formidable power in the world. His cue was not necessarily to fight on all occasions; for delay often fights better than an army against a foreign invader. When a battle and a victory were absolutely necessary we have seen the magnificent calmness which at Nieuport secured triumph under the shadow of death. Had he accepted Spinola's challenge in November, he would probably have defeated him and have taken Groll. He might not, however, have annihilated his adversary, who, even when worsted, would perhaps have effected his escape. The city was of small value to the republic. The principal advantage of a victory would have been increased military renown for himself. Viewed in this light, there is something almost sublime in the phlegmatic and perfectly republican composure with which he disdained laurels, easily enough, as it would stem, to have been acquired, and denied his soldiers the bloodshed and the suffering for which they were clamouring.

And yet, after thoroughly weighing and measuring all these circumstances, it is natural to regret that he did not on that occasion rise upon Spinola and smite him to the earth. The Lord had delivered him into his hands. The chances of his own defeat were small, its probable consequences, should it occur, insignificant. It is hardly conceivable that he could have been so completely overthrown as to allow the Catholic commander to do in November what he had tried all summer in vain to accomplish, cross the Yssel and the Waal, with the dregs of his army, and invade Holland and Zeeland in midwinter, over the prostrate bodies of Maurice and all his forces. On the other hand, that the stadholder would have sent the enemy reeling back to his bogs, with hardly the semblance of an army at his heels, was almost certain: The effect of such a blow upon impending negotiations,

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and especially upon the impressible imagination of Henry and the pedantic shrewdness of James, would have been very valuable. It was not surprising that the successful soldier who sat on the French throne, and who had been ever ready to wager life and crown on the results of a stricken field, should be loud in his expressions of disapprobation and disgust. Yet no man knew better than the sagacious Gascon that fighting to win a crown, and to save a republic, were two essentially different things.

In the early summer of this year Admiral Haultain, whom we lately saw occupied with tossing Sarmiento's Spanish legion into the sea off the harbour of Dover, had been despatched to the Spanish coast on a still more important errand. The outward bound Portuguese merchantmen and the home returning fleets from America, which had been absent nearly two years, might be fallen in with at any moment, in the latitude of 36-38 deg. The admiral, having received orders, therefore, to cruise carefully in those regions, sailed for the shores of Portugal with a squadron of twenty-four war-ships. His expedition was not very successful. He picked up a prize or two here and there, and his presence on the coast prevented the merchant-fleet from sailing out of Lisbon for the East Indies, the merchandise already on board being disembarked and the voyage postponed to a more favourable opportunity.

He saw nothing, however, of the long-expected ships from the golden West Indies—as Mexico, Peru, and Brazil were then indiscriminately called— and after parting company with six of his own ships, which were dispersed and damaged in a gale, and himself suffering from a dearth of provisions, he was forced to return without much gain or glory.

In the month of September he was once more despatched on the same service. He had nineteen war-galleots of the first class, and two yachts, well equipped and manned. Vice-admiral of the fleet was Regnier Klaaszoon (or Nicholson), of Amsterdam, a name which should always be held fresh in remembrance, not only by mariners and Netherlanders, but by all men whose pulses can beat in sympathy with practical heroism.

The admiral coasted deliberately along the shores of Spain and Portugal. It seemed impossible that the golden fleets, which, as it was ascertained, had not yet arrived, could now escape the vigilance of the Dutch cruisers. An occasional merchant-ship or small war-galley was met from time to time and chased into the harbours. A landing was here and there effected and a few villages burned. But these were not the prizes nor the trophies sought. On the 19th September a storm off the Portuguese coast scattered the fleet; six of the best and largest ships being permanently lost sight of and separated from the rest. With the other thirteen Haultain now cruised off Cape St. Vincent directly across the ordinary path of the homeward-bound treasure ships.

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On the 6th October many sails were descried in the distance, and the longing eyes of the Hollanders were at last gratified with what was supposed to be the great West India commercial squadrons. The delusion was brief. Instead of innocent and richly freighted merchantmen, the new comers soon proved to be the war-ships of Admiral Dan Luis de Fazardo, eighteen great galleons and eight galleys strong, besides lesser vessels—the most formidable fleet that for years had floated in those waters. There had been time for Admiral Haultain to hold but a very brief consultation with his chief officers. As it was manifest that the Hollanders were enormously over-matched, it was decided to manoeuvre as well as possible for the weather-gage, and then to fight or to effect an escape, as might seem most expedient after fairly testing the strength of the enemy. It was blowing a fresh gale, and the Netherland fleet had as much as they could stagger with under close-reefed topsails. The war-galleys, fit only for fair weather, were soon forced to take refuge under the lee of the land, but the eighteen galleons, the most powerful vessels then known to naval architecture, were bearing directly down, full before the wind, upon the Dutch fleet.

It must be admitted that Admiral Haultain hardly displayed as much energy now as he had done in the Straits of Dover against the unarmed transports the year before. His ships were soon scattered, right and left, and the manoeuvres for the weather-gage resolved themselves into a general scramble for escape. Vice-Admiral Klaaszoon alone held firm, and met the onset of the first comers of the Spanish fleet. A fierce combat, yard-arm to yard-arm, ensued. Klaaszoon's mainmast went by the board, but Haultain, with five ships, all that could be rallied, coming to the rescue, the assailants for a moment withdrew. Five Dutch vessels of moderate strength were now in action against the eighteen great galleons of Fazardo. Certainly it was not an even game, but it might have been played with more heart and better skill. There was but a half-hour of daylight left when Klaaszoon's crippled ship was again attacked. This time there was no attempt to offer him assistance; the rest of the Dutch fleet crowding all the sails their masts would bear, and using all the devices of their superior seamanship, not to harass the enemy, but to steal as swiftly as possible out of his way. Honestly confessing that they dared not come into the fight, they bore away for dear life in every direction. Night came on, and the last that the fugitives knew of the events off Cape St. Vincent was that stout Regnier Klaaszoon had been seen at sunset in the midst of the Spanish fleet; the sound of his broadsides saluting their ears as they escaped.



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Left to himself, alone in a dismantled ship, the vice-admiral never thought of yielding to the eighteen Spanish galleons. To the repeated summons of Don Luis Fazardo that he should surrender he remained obstinately deaf. Knowing that it was impossible for him to escape, and fearing that he might blow up his vessel rather than surrender, the enemy made no attempt to board. Spanish chivalry was hardly more conspicuous on this occasion than Dutch valour, as illustrated by Admiral Haultain. Two whole days and nights Klaaszoon drifted about in his crippled ship, exchanging broadsides with his antagonists, and with his colours flying on the stump of his mast. The fact would seem incredible, were it not attested by perfectly trustworthy contemporary accounts. At last his hour seemed to have come. His ship was sinking; a final demand for surrender, with promise of quarter, was made. Out of his whole crew but sixty remained alive; many of them badly wounded.

He quietly announced to his officers and men his decision never to surrender, in which all concurred. They knelt together upon the deck, and the admiral made a prayer, which all fervently joined. With his own hand Klaaszoon then lighted the powder magazine, and the ship was blown into the air. Two sailors, all that were left alive, were picked out of the sea by the Spaniards and brought on board one of the vessels of the fleet. Desperately mutilated, those grim Dutchmen lived a few minutes to tell the tale, and then died defiant on the enemy's deck.

Yet it was thought that a republic, which could produce men like Regnier Klaaszoon and his comrades, could be subjected again to despotism, after a war for independence of forty years, and that such sailors could be forbidden to sail the eastern and western seas. No epigrammatic phrase has been preserved of this simple Regnier, the son of Nicholas. He only did what is sometimes talked about in phraseology more or less melo-dramatic, and did it in a very plain way.

Such extreme deeds may have become so much less necessary in the world, that to threaten them is apt to seem fantastic. Exactly at that crisis of history, however, and especially in view of the Dutch admiral commanding having refused a combat of one to three, the speechless self-devotion of the vice-admiral was better than three years of eloquent arguments and a ship-load of diplomatic correspondence, such as were already impending over the world.

Admiral Haultain returned with all his ships uninjured—the six missing vessels having found their way at last safely back to the squadron—but with a very great crack to his reputation. It was urged very justly, both by the States-General and the public, that if one ship under a determined commander could fight the whole Spanish fleet two days and nights, and sink unconquered at last, ten ships more might have put the enemy to flight, or at least have saved the vice-admiral from destruction.



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But very few days after the incidents just described, the merchant fleet which, instead of Don Luis Fazardo's war galleons, Admiral Haultain had so longed to encounter, arrived safely at San Lucar. It was the most splendid treasure-fleet that had ever entered a Spanish port, and the Dutch admiral's heart might well have danced for joy, had he chanced to come a little later on the track. There were fifty ships, under charge of General Alonzo de Ochaes Galindo and General Ganevaye. They had on board, according to the registers, 1,914,176 dollars worth of bullion for the king, and 6,086,617 dollars for merchants, or 8,000,000 dollars in all, besides rich cargoes of silk, cochineal, sarsaparilla, indigo, Brazil wood, and hides; the result of two years of pressure upon Peruvians, Mexicans, and Brazilians. Never had Spanish finances been at so low an ebb. Never was so splendid an income more desirable. The king's share of the cargo was enough to pay half the arrearages due to his mutinous troops; and for such housekeeping this was to be in funds.

There were no further exploits on land or sea that year. There were, however, deaths of three personages often mentioned in this history. The learned Justus Lipsius died in Louvain, a good editor and scholar, and as sincere a Catholic at last as he had been alternately a bigoted Calvinist and an earnest Lutheran. His reputation was thought to have suffered by his later publications, but the world at large was occupied with sterner stuff than those classic productions, and left the final decision to posterity.

A man of a different mould, the turbulent, high-born, hard fighting, hard-drinking Hohenlo, died also this year, brother-in-law and military guardian, subsequently rival and political and personal antagonist, of Prince Maurice. His daring deeds and his troublesome and mischievous adventures have been recounted in these pages. His name will be always prominent in the history of the republic, to which he often rendered splendid service, but he died, as he had lived, a glutton and a melancholy sot.

The third remarkable personage who passed away was one whose name will be remembered as long as the Netherlands have a history, old Count John of Nassau, only surviving brother of William the Silent. He had been ever prominent and deeply interested in the great religious and political movements of upper and lower Germany, and his services in the foundation of the Dutch commonwealth were signal, and ever generously acknowledged. At one period, as will be recollected, he was stadholder of Gelderland, and he was ever ready with sword, purse, and counsel to aid in the great struggle for independence.

CHAPTER XLVI.



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General desire for peace—Political aspect of Europe—Designs of the kings of England, France, and Spain concerning the United Provinces —Matrimonial schemes of Spain—Conference between the French ministers and the Dutch envoy—Confidential revelations—Henry's desire to annex the Netherlands to France—Discussion of the subject—Artifice of Barneveld—Impracticability of a compromise between the Provinces and Spain—Formation of a West India Company— Secret mission from the archdukes to the Hague—Reply of the States- General—Return of the archdukes' envoy—Arrangement of an eight months' armistice.

The general tendency towards a pacification in Europe at the close of the year could hardly be mistaken. The languor of fatigue, rather than any sincere desire for peace seemed to make negotiations possible. It was not likely that great truths would yet be admitted, or that ruling individuals or classes would recognise the rise of a new system out of the rapidly dissolving elements of the one which had done its work. War was becoming more and more expensive, while commerce, as the world slowly expanded itself, and manifested its unsuspected resources, was becoming more and more lucrative. It was not, perhaps, that men hated each other less, but that they had for a time exhausted their power and their love for slaughter. Meanwhile new devices for injuring humanity and retarding its civilization were revealing themselves out of that very intellectual progress which ennobled the new era. Although war might still be regarded as the normal condition of the civilized world, it was possible for the chosen ones to whom the earth and its fulness belonged, to inflict general damage otherwise than by perpetual battles.

In the east, west, north, and south of Europe peace was thrusting itself as it were uncalled for and unexpected upon the general attention. Charles and his nephew Sigismund, and the false Demetrius, and the intrigues of the Jesuits, had provided too much work for Sweden, Poland, and Russia to leave those countries much leisure for mingling in the more important business of Europe at this epoch, nor have their affairs much direct connection with this history. Venice, in its quarrels with the Jesuits, had brought Spain, France, and all Italy into a dead lock, out of which a compromise had been made not more satisfactory to the various parties than compromises are apt to prove. The Dutch republic still maintained the position which it had assumed, a quarter of a century before, of actual and legal independence; while Spain, on the other hand, still striving after universal monarchy, had not, of course, abated one jot of its pretensions to absolute dominion over its rebellious subjects in the Netherlands.



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The holy Roman and the sublime Ottoman empires had also drifted into temporary peace; the exploits of the Persians and other Asiatic movements having given Ahmed more work than was convenient on his eastern frontier, while Stephen Botshkay had so completely got the better of Rudolph in Transylvania as to make repose desirable. So there was a treaty between the great Turk and the great Christian on the basis of what each possessed; Stephen Botshkay was recognized as prince of Transylvania with part of Hungary, and, when taken off soon afterwards by family poison, he recommended on his death-bed the closest union between Hungary and Transylvania, as well as peace with the emperor, so long as it might be compatible with the rights of the Magyars.

France and England, while suspecting each other, dreading each other, and very sincerely hating each other, were drawn into intimate relations by their common detestation of Spain, with which power both had now formal treaties of alliance and friendship. This was the result of their mighty projects for humbling the house of Austria and annihilating its power. England hated the Netherlands because of the injuries she had done them, the many benefits she had conferred upon them, and more than all on account of the daily increasing commercial rivalry between the two most progressive states in Christendom, the two powers which, comparatively weak as they were in territory, capital, and population, were most in harmony with the spirit of the age.

The Government of England was more hostile than its people to the United Provinces. James never spoke of the Netherlanders but as upstarts and rebels, whose success ought to be looked upon with horror by the Lord's anointed everywhere. He could not shut his eyes to the fact that, with the republic destroyed, and a Spanish sacerdotal despotism established in Holland and Zeeland, with Jesuit seminaries in full bloom in Amsterdam and the Hague, his own rebels in Ireland might prove more troublesome than ever, and gunpowder plots in London become common occurrences.

The Earl of Tyrone at that very moment was receiving enthusiastic hospitality at the archduke's court, much to the disgust of the Presbyterian sovereign of the United Kingdom, who nevertheless, despite his cherished theology, was possessed with an unconquerable craving for a close family alliance with the most Catholic king. His ministers were inclined to Spain, and the British Government was at heart favourable to some kind of arrangement by which the Netherlands might be reduced to the authority of their former master, in case no scheme could be carried into effect for acquiring a virtual sovereignty over those provinces by the British crown. Moreover, and most of all, the King of France being supposed to contemplate the annexation of the Netherlands to his own dominions, the jealousy excited by such ambition made it even possible for James's Government to tolerate the idea of Dutch independence. Thus the court and cabinet of England were as full of contradictory hopes and projects as a madman's brain.

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The rivalry between the courts of England and France for the Spanish marriages and by means of them to obtain ultimately the sovereignty of all the Netherlands, was the key to most of the diplomacy and interpalatial intrigue of the several first years of the century. The negotiations of Cornwallis at Madrid were almost simultaneous with the schemes of Villeroy and Rosny at Paris.

A portion of the English Government, so soon as its treaty with Spain had been signed, seemed secretly determined to do as much injury to the republic as might lie in its power. While at heart convinced that the preservation of the Netherlands was necessary for England's safety, it was difficult for James and the greater part of his advisers to overcome their repugnance to the republic, and their jealousy of the great commercial successes which the republic had achieved.

It was perfectly plain that a continuance of the war by England and the Netherlands united would have very soon ended in the entire humiliation of Spain. Now that peace had been made, however, it was thought possible that England might make a bargain with her late enemy for destroying the existence and dividing the territory of her late ally. Accordingly the Spanish cabinet lost no time in propounding, under seal of secrecy, and with even more mystery than was usually employed by the most Catholic court, a scheme for the marriage of the Prince of Wales with the Infanta; the bridal pair, when arrived at proper age, to be endowed with all the Netherlands, both obedient and republican, in full sovereignty. One thing was necessary to the carrying out of this excellent plot, the reduction of the republic into her ancient subjection to Spain before her territory could be transferred to the future Princess of Wales.

It was proposed by the Spanish Government that England should undertake this part of the job, and that King James for such service should receive an annual pension of one million ducats a year. It was also stipulated that certain cities in the republican dominions should be pledged to him as security for the regular payment of that stipend. Sir Charles Cornwallis, English ambassador in Spain, lent a most favourable ear to these proposals, and James eagerly sanctioned them so soon as they were secretly imparted to that monarch. "The king here," said Cornwallis, "hath need of the King of Great Britain's arm. Our king . . . hath good occasion to use the help of the King of Spain's purse. The assistance of England to help that nation out of that quicksand of the Low Countries, where so long they have struggled to tread themselves out, and by proof find that deeper in, will be a sovereign medicine to the malady of this estate. The addition of a million of ducats to the revenue of our sovereign will be a good help to his estate."

The Spanish Government had even the effrontery to offer the English envoy a reward of two hundred thousand crowns if the negotiations should prove successful. Care was to be taken however that Great Britain, by this accession of power, both present and in prospect, should not grow too great, Spain reserving to herself certain strongholds and

maritime positions in the Netherlands, for the proper security of her European and Indian commerce.



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It was thought high time for the bloodshed to cease in the provinces; and as England, by making a treaty of peace with Spain when Spain was at the last gasp, had come to the rescue of that power, it was logical that she should complete the friendly work by compelling the rebellious provinces to awake from their dream of independence. If the statesmen of Holland believed in the possibility of that independence, the statesmen of England knew better. If the turbulent little republic was not at last convinced that it had no right to create so much turmoil and inconvenience for its neighbours and for Christendom in general in order to maintain its existence, it should be taught its duty by the sovereigns of Spain and Britain.

It was observed, however, that the more greedily James listened day after day to the marriage propositions, the colder became the Spanish cabinet in regard to that point, the more disposed to postpone those nuptials "to God's providence and future event."

The high hopes founded on these secret stratagems were suddenly dashed to the earth before the end of the year; the explosion of the Gunpowder Plot blowing the castles in Spain into the air.

Of course the Spanish politicians vied with each other in expressions of horror and indignation at the Plot, and the wicked contrivers thereof, and suggested to Cornwallis that the King of France was probably at the bottom of it.

They declined to give up Owen and Baldwin, however, and meantime the negotiations for the marriage of the Prince of Wales and the Infanta, the million ducats of yearly pension for the needy James, and the reduction of the Dutch republic to its ancient slavery to Spain "under the eye and arm of Britain," faded indefinitely away. Salisbury indeed was always too wise to believe in the possibility of the schemes with which James and some of his other counsellors had been so much infatuated.

It was almost dramatic that these plottings between James and the Catholic king against the life of the republic should have been signally and almost simultaneously avenged by the conspiracy of Guido Fawkes.

On the other hand, Rosny had imparted to the Dutch envoy the schemes of Henry and his ministers in regard to the same object, early in 1605. "Spain is more tired of the war," said he to Aerssens, under seal of absolute secrecy, "than you are yourselves. She is now negotiating for a marriage between the Dauphin and the Infanta, and means to give her the United Provinces, as at present constituted, for a marriage portion. Villeroy and Sillery believe the plan feasible, but demand all the Netherlands together. As for me I shall have faith in it if they send their Infanta hither at once, or make a regular cession of the territory. Do you believe that my lords the States will agree to the proposition?"

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It would be certainly difficult to match in history the effrontery of such a question. The republican envoy was asked point blank whether his country would resign her dearly gained liberty and give herself as a dowry for Philip the Second's three-years-old grand daughter. Aerssens replied cautiously that he had never heard the matter discussed in the provinces. It had always been thought that the French king had no pretensions to their territory, but had ever advocated their independence. He hinted that such a proposition was a mere apple of discord thrown between two good allies by Spain. Rosny admitted the envoy's arguments, and said that his Majesty would do nothing without the consent of the Dutch Government, and that he should probably be himself sent ere long to the Hague to see if he could not obtain some little recognition from the States.

Thus it was confidentially revealed to the agent of the republic that her candid adviser and ally was hard at work, in conjunction with her ancient enemy, to destroy her independence, annex her territory, and appropriate to himself all the fruits of her great war, her commercial achievements, and her vast sacrifices; while, as we have just seen, English politicians at the same moment were attempting to accomplish the same feat for England's supposed advantage. All that was wished by Henry to begin with was a little, a very little, recognition of his sovereignty. "You will do well to reflect on this delicate matter in time," wrote Aerssens to the Advocate; "I know that the King of Spain is inclined to make this offer, and that they are mad enough in this place to believe the thing feasible. For me, I reject all such talk until they have got the Infanta—that is to say, until the Greek Kalends. I am ashamed that they should believe it here, and fearful that there is still more evil concealed than I know of."

Towards the close of the year 1606 the French Government became still more eager to carry out their plans of alliance and absorption. Aerssens, who loved a political intrigue better than became a republican envoy, was perfectly aware of Henry's schemes. He was disposed to humour them, in order to make sure of his military assistance, but with the secret intention of seeing them frustrated by the determined opposition of the States.

The French ministers, by command of their sovereign, were disposed to deal very plainly. They informed the Dutch diplomatist, with very little circumlocution, that if the republic wished assistance from France she was to pay a heavy price for it. Not a pound of flesh only, but the whole body corporate, was to be surrendered if its destruction was to be averted by French arms.

"You know," said Sillery, "that princes in all their actions consider their interests, and his Majesty has not so much affection for your conservation as to induce him to resign his peaceful position. Tell me, I pray you, what would you do for his Majesty in case anything should be done for you? You were lately in Holland. Do you think that they would give themselves to the king if he assisted them? Do you not believe that Prince

Maurice has designs on the sovereignty, and would prevent the fulfilment of the king's hopes? What will you do for us in return for our assistance?"



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Aerssens was somewhat perplexed, but he was cunning at fence. "We will do all we can," said he, "for any change is more supportable than the yoke of Spain."

"What can you do then?" persisted Sillery. "Give us your opinion in plain French, I beg of you, and lay aside all passion; for we have both the same object—your preservation. Besides interest, his Majesty has affection for you. Let him only see some advantage for himself to induce to assist you more powerfully. Suppose you should give us what you have and what you may acquire in Flanders with the promise to treat secretly with us when the time comes. Could you do that?"

The envoy replied that this would be tearing the commonwealth in pieces. If places were given away, the jealousy of the English would be excited. Certainly it would be no light matter to surrender Sluys, the fruit of Maurice's skill and energy, the splendidly earned equivalent for the loss of Ostend. "As to Sluys and other places in Flanders," said Aerssens, "I don't know if towns comprised in our Union could be transferred or pledged without their own consent and that of the States. Should such a thing get wind we might be ruined. Nevertheless I will write to learn what his Majesty may hope."

"The people," returned Sillery, "need know nothing of this transfer; for it might be made secretly by Prince Maurice, who could put the French quietly into Sluys and other Flemish places. Meantime you had best make a journey to Holland to arrange matters so that the deputies, coming hither, may be amply instructed in regard to Sluys, and no time be lost. His Majesty is determined to help you if you know how to help yourselves."

The two men then separated, Sillery enjoining it upon the envoy to see the king next morning, "in order to explain to his Majesty, as he had just been doing to himself, that this sovereignty could not be transferred, without the consent of the whole people, nor the people be consulted in secret."

"It is necessary therefore to be armed," continued Henry's minister very significantly, "before aspiring to the sovereignty."

Thus there was a faint glimmer of appreciation at the French court of the meaning of popular sovereignty. It did not occur to the minister that the right of giving consent was to be respected. The little obstacle was to be overcome by stratagem and by force. Prince Maurice was to put French garrisons stealthily into Sluys and other towns conquered by the republic in Flanders. Then the magnanimous ally was to rise at the right moment and overcome all resistance by force of arms. The plot was a good one. It is passing strange, however, that the character of the Nassaus and of the Dutch nation should after the last fifty years have been still so misunderstood. It seemed in France possible that Maurice would thus defile his honour and the Netherlanders barter their liberty, by accepting a new tyrant in place of the one so long ago deposed.



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“This is the marrow of our conference,” said Aerssens to Barneveld, reporting the interview, “and you may thus perceive whither are tending the designs of his Majesty. It seems that they are aspiring here to the sovereignty, and all my letters have asserted the contrary. If you will examine a little more closely, however, you will find that there is no contradiction. This acquisition would be desirable for France if it could be made peacefully. As it can only be effected by war you may make sure that it will not be attempted; for the great maxim and basis of this kingdom is to preserve repose, and at the same time give such occupation to the King of Spain that his means shall be consumed and his designs frustrated. All this will cease if we make peace.

“Thus in treating with the king we must observe two rules. The first is that we can maintain ourselves no longer unless powerfully assisted, and that, the people inclining to peace, we shall be obliged to obey the people. Secondly, we must let no difficulty appear as to the desire expressed by his Majesty to have the sovereignty of these provinces. We ought to let him hope for it, but to make him understand that by ordinary and legitimate means he cannot aspire to it. We will make him think that we have an equal desire with himself, and we shall thus take from those evil-disposed counsellors the power to injure us who are always persuading him that he is only making us great for ourselves, and thus giving us the power to injure him. In short, the king can hope nothing from us overtly, and certainly nothing covertly. By explaining to him that we require the authorization of the people, and by showing ourselves prompt to grant his request, he will be the very first to prevent us from taking any steps, in order that his repose may not be disturbed. I know that France does not wish to go to war with Spain. Let us then pretend that we wish to be under the dominion of France, and that we will lead our people to that point if the king desires it, but that it cannot be done secretly. Believe me, he will not wish it on such conditions, while we shall gain much by this course. Would to God that we could engage France in war with Spain. All the utility would be ours; and the accidents of arms would so press them to Spain, Italy, and other places, that they would have little leisure to think of us. Consider all this and conceal it from Buzanval.”

Buzanval, it is well known, was the French envoy at the Hague, and it must be confessed that these schemes and paltry falsehoods on the part of the Dutch agent were as contemptible as any of the plots contrived every day in Paris or Madrid. Such base coin as this was still circulating in diplomacy as if fresh from the Machiavellian mint; but the republican agent ought to have known that his Government had long ago refused to pass it current.

Soon afterwards this grave matter was discussed at the Hague between Henry's envoy and Barneveld. It was a very delicate negotiation. The Advocate wished to secure the assistance of a powerful but most unscrupulous ally, and at the same time to conceal his real intention to frustrate the French design upon the independence of the republic.



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Disingenuous and artful as his conduct unquestionably was, it may at least be questioned whether in that age of deceit any other great statesman would have been more frank. If the comparatively weak commonwealth, by openly and scornfully refusing all the insidious and selfish propositions of the French king, had incurred that monarch's wrath, it would have taken a noble position no doubt, but it would have perhaps been utterly destroyed. The Advocate considered himself justified in using the artifices of war against a subtle and dangerous enemy who wore the mask of a friend. When the price demanded for military protection was the voluntary abandonment of national independence in favour of the protector, the man who guided the affairs of the Netherlands did not hesitate to humour and to outwit the king who strove to subjugate the republic. At the same time—however one may be disposed to censure the dissimulation from the standing-ground of a lofty morality—it should not be forgotten that Barneveld never hinted at any possible connivance on his part with an infraction of the laws. Whatever might be the result of time, of persuasion, of policy, he never led Henry or his ministers to believe that the people of the Netherlands could be deprived of their liberty by force or fraud. He was willing to play a political game, in which he felt himself inferior to no man, trusting to his own skill and coolness for success. If the tyrant were defeated, and at the same time made to serve the cause of the free commonwealth, the Advocate believed this to be fair play.

Knowing himself surrounded by gamblers and tricksters, he probably did not consider himself to be cheating because he did not play his cards upon the table.

So when Buzanval informed him early in October that the possession of Sluys and other Flemish towns would not be sufficient for the king, but that they must offer the sovereignty on even more favourable conditions than had once been proposed to Henry III., the Advocate told him roundly that my lords the States were not likely to give the provinces to any man, but meant to maintain their freedom and their rights. The envoy replied that his Majesty would be able to gain more favour perhaps with the common people of the country.

When it is remembered that the States had offered the sovereignty of the provinces to Henry III., abjectly and as it were without any conditions at all, the effrontery of Henry IV. may be measured, who claimed the same sovereignty, after twenty years of republican independence, upon even more favourable terms than those which his predecessor had rejected.

Barneveld, in order to mitigate the effect of his plump refusal of the royal overtures, explained to Buzanval, what Buzanval very well knew, that the times had now changed; that in those days, immediately after the death of William the Silent, despair and disorder had reigned in the provinces, “while that dainty delicacy—liberty—had not so long been sweetly tickling the appetites of the people; that the English had not then acquired their present footing in the country, nor the house of Nassau the age, the credit, and authority to which it had subsequently attained.”



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He then intimated—and here began the deception, which certainly did not deceive Buzanval—that if things were handled in the right way, there was little doubt as to the king's reaching the end proposed, but that all depended on good management. It was an error, he said, to suppose that in one, two, or three months, eight provinces and their principal members, to wit, forty good cities all enjoying liberty and equality, could be induced to accept a foreign sovereign.

Such language was very like irony, and probably not too subtle to escape the fine perception of the French envoy.

The first thing to be done, continued the Advocate, is to persuade the provinces to aid the king with all their means to conquer the disunited provinces—to dispose of the archdukes, in short, and to drive the Spaniards from the soil—and then, little by little, to make it clear that there could be no safety for the States except in reducing the whole body of the Netherlands under the authority of the king. Let his Majesty begin by conquering and annexing to his crown the provinces nearest him, and he would then be able to persuade the others to a reasonable arrangement.

Whether the Advocate's general reply was really considered by Buzanval as a grave sarcasm, politely veiled, may be a question. That envoy, however, spoke to his Government of the matter as surrounded with difficulties, but not wholly desperate. Barneveld was, he said, inclined to doubt whether the archdukes would be able, before any negotiations were begun, to comply with the demand which he had made upon them to have a declaration in writing that the United Provinces were to be regarded as a free people over whom they pretended to no authority. If so, the French king would at once be informed of the fact. Meantime the envoy expressed the safe opinion that, if Prince Maurice and the Advocate together should take the matter of Henry's sovereignty in hand with zeal, they might conduct the bark to the desired haven. Surely this was an 'if' with much virtue in it. And notwithstanding that he chose to represent Barneveld as, rich, tired, at the end of his Latin, and willing enough to drop his anchor in a snug harbour, in order to make his fortune secure, it was obvious enough that Buzanval had small hope at heart of seeing his master's purpose accomplished.

As to Prince Maurice, the envoy did not even affect to believe him capable of being made use of, strenuous as the efforts of the French Government in that direction had been. "He has no private designs that I can find out," said Buzanval, doing full justice to the straightforward and sincere character of the prince. "He asks no change for himself or for his country." The envoy added, as a matter of private opinion however, that if an alteration were to be made in the constitution of the provinces, Maurice would prefer that it should be made in favour of France than of any other Government.



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He lost no opportunity, moreover, of impressing it upon his Government that if the sovereignty were to be secured for France at all, it could only be done by observing great caution, and by concealing their desire to swallow the republic of which they were professing themselves the friends. The jealousy of England was sure to be awakened if France appeared too greedy at the beginning. On the other hand, that power "might be the more easily rocked into a profound sleep if France did not show its appetite at the very beginning of the banquet." That the policy of France should be steadily but stealthily directed towards getting possession of as many strong places as possible in the Netherlands had long been his opinion. "Since we don't mean to go to war," said he a year before to Villeroy, "let us at least follow the example of the English, who have known how to draw a profit out of the necessities of this state. Why should we not demand, or help ourselves to, a few good cities. Sluys, for example, would be a security for us, and of great advantage."

Suspicion was rife on this subject at the court of Spain. Certainly it would be less humiliating to the Catholic crown to permit the independence of its rebellious subjects than to see them incorporated into the realms of either France or England. It is not a very striking indication of the capacity of great rulers to look far into the future that both, France and England should now be hankering after the sovereignty of those very provinces, the solemn offer of which by the provinces themselves both France and England had peremptorily and almost contemptuously refused.

In Spain itself the war was growing very wearisome. Three hundred thousand dollars a month could no longer be relied upon from the royal exchequer, or from the American voyages, or from the kite-flying operations of the merchant princes on the Genoa exchange.

A great fleet, to be sure, had recently arrived, splendidly laden, from the West Indies, as already stated. Pagan slaves, scourged to their dreadful work, continued to supply to their Christian taskmasters the hidden treasures of the New World in exchange for the blessings of the Evangel as thus revealed; but these treasures could never fill the perpetual sieve of the Netherland war, rapidly and conscientiously as they were poured into it, year after year.

The want of funds in the royal exchequer left the soldiers in Flanders unpaid, and as an inevitable result mutiny admirably organized and calmly defiant was again established throughout the obedient provinces. This happened regularly once a year, so that it seemed almost as business-like a proceeding for an Eletto to proclaim mutiny as for a sovereign to declare martial law. Should the whole army mutiny at once, what might become of the kingdom of Spain?

Moreover, a very uneasy feeling was prevalent that, as formerly, the Turks had crossed the Hellespont into Europe by means of a Genoese alliance and Genoese galleys, so now the Moors were contemplating the reconquest of Granada, and of their other

ancient possessions in Spain, with the aid of the Dutch republic and her powerful fleets.
—[Grotius, xv. 715]



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The Dutch cruisers watched so carefully on the track of the homeward-bound argosies, that the traffic was becoming more dangerous than lucrative, particularly since the public law established by Admiral Fazardo, that it was competent for naval commanders to hang, drown, or burn the crews of the enemy's merchantmen.

The Portuguese were still more malcontent than the Spaniards. They had gained little by the absorption of their kingdom by Spain, save participation in the war against the republic, the result of which had been to strip them almost entirely of the conquests of Vasco de Gama and his successors, and to close to them the ports of the Old World and the New.

In the republic there was a party for peace, no doubt, but peace only with independence. As for a return to their original subjection to Spain they were unanimously ready to accept forty years more of warfare rather than to dream of such a proposition. There were many who deliberately preferred war to peace. Bitter experience had impressed very deeply on the Netherlanders the great precept that faith would never be kept with heretics. The present generation had therefore been taught from their cradles to believe that the word peace in Spanish mouths simply meant the Holy Inquisition. It was not unnatural, too, perhaps, that a people who had never known what it was to be at peace might feel, in regard to that blessing, much as the blind or the deaf towards colour or music; as something useful and agreeable, no doubt, but with which they might the more cheerfully dispense, as peculiar circumstances had always kept them in positive ignorance of its nature. The instinct of commercial greediness made the merchants of Holland and Zeeland, and especially those of Amsterdam, dread the revival of Antwerp in case of peace, to the imagined detriment of the great trading centres of the republic. It was felt also to be certain that Spain, in case of negotiations, would lay down as an indispensable preliminary the abstinence on the part of the Netherlanders from all intercourse with the Indies, East or West; and although such a prohibition would be received by those republicans with perfect contempt, yet the mere discussion of the subject moved their spleen. They had already driven the Portuguese out of a large portion of the field in the east, and they were now preparing by means of the same machinery to dispute the monopoly of the Spaniards in the west. To talk of excluding such a people as this from intercourse with any portion of the Old World or the New was the mumbling of dotage; yet nothing could be more certain than that such would be the pretensions of Spain.



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As for the stadholder, his vocation was war, his greatness had been derived from war, his genius had never turned itself to pacific pursuits. Should a peace be negotiated, not only would his occupation be gone, but he might even find himself hampered for means. It was probable that his large salaries, as captain and admiral-general of the forces of the republic, would be seriously curtailed, in case his services in the field were no longer demanded, while such secret hopes as he might entertain of acquiring that sovereign power which Barneveld had been inclined to favour, were more likely to be fulfilled if the war should be continued. At the same time, if sovereignty were to be his at all, he was distinctly opposed to such limitations of his authority as were to have been proposed by the States to his father. Rather than reign on those conditions, he avowed that he would throw himself head foremost from the great tower of Hague Castle.

Moreover, the prince was smarting under the consciousness of having lost military reputation, however undeservedly, in the latter campaigns, and might reasonably hope to gain new glory in the immediate future. Thus, while his great rival, Marquis Spinola, whose fame had grown to so luxuriant a height in so brief a period, had many reasons to dread the results of future campaigning, Maurice seemed to have personally much to lose and nothing to hope for in peace. Spinola was over head and ears in debt. In the past two years he had spent millions of florins out of his own pocket. His magnificent fortune and boundless credit were seriously compromised. He had found it an easier task to take Ostend and relieve Grol than to bolster up the finances of Spain.

His acceptances were becoming as much a drug upon the exchanges of Antwerp, Genoa, or Augsburg, as those of the most Catholic king or their Highnesses the archdukes. Ruin stared him in the face, notwithstanding the deeds with which he had startled the world, and he was therefore sincerely desirous of peace, provided, of course, that all those advantages for which the war had been waged in vain could now be secured by negotiation.

There had been, since the arrival of the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands, just forty years of fighting. Maurice and the war had been born in the same year, and it would be difficult for him to comprehend that his whole life's work had been a superfluous task, to be rubbed away now with a sponge. Yet that Spain, on the entrance to negotiations, would demand of the provinces submission to her authority, re-establishment of the Catholic religion, abstinence from Oriental or American commerce, and the toleration of Spanish soldiers over all the Netherlands, seemed indubitable.

It was equally unquestionable that the seven provinces would demand recognition of their national independence by Spain, would refuse public practice of the Roman religion within their domains, and would laugh to scorn any proposed limitations to their participation in the world's traffic. As to the presence of Spanish troops on their soil, that was, of course, an inconceivable idea.

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Where, then, could even a loophole be found through which the possibility of a compromise could be espied? The ideas of the contending parties were as much opposed to each other as fire and snow. Nevertheless, the great forces of the world seemed to have gradually settled into such an equilibrium as to make the continuance of the war for the present impossible.

Accordingly, the peace-party in Brussels had cautiously put forth its tentacles late in 1606, and again in the early days of the new year. Walrave van Wittenhorst and Doctor Gevaerts had been allowed to come to the Hague, ostensibly on private business, but with secret commission from the archdukes to feel and report concerning the political atmosphere. They found that it was a penal offence in the republic to talk of peace or of truce. They nevertheless suspected that there might be a more sympathetic layer beneath the very chill surface which they everywhere encountered. Having intimated in the proper quarters that the archdukes would be ready to receive or to appoint commissioners for peace or armistice, if becoming propositions should be made, they were allowed on the 10th of January, 1607, to make a communication to the States-General. They indulged in the usual cheap commonplaces on the effusion of blood, the calamities of war, and the blessings of peace, and assured the States of the very benignant disposition of their Highnesses at Brussels.

The States-General, in their reply, seventeen days afterwards, remarking that the archdukes persisted in their unfounded pretensions of authority over them, took occasion to assure their Highnesses that they had no chance to obtain such authority except by the sword. Whether they were like to accomplish much in that way the history of the past might sufficiently indicate, while on the other hand the States would always claim the right, and never renounce the hope, of recovering those provinces which had belonged to their free commonwealth since the union of Utrecht, and which force and fraud had torn away.

During twenty-five years that union had been confirmed as a free state by solemn decrees, and many public acts and dealings with the mightiest potentates of Europe, nor could any other answer now be made to the archdukes than the one always given to his holy Roman Imperial Majesty, and other princes, to wit, that no negotiations could be had with powers making any pretensions in conflict with the solemn decrees and well-maintained rights of the United Netherlands.

It was in this year that two words became more frequent in the mouths of men than they had ever been before; two words which as the ages rolled on were destined to exercise a wider influence over the affairs of this planet than was yet dreamed of by any thinker in Christendom. Those words were America and Virginia. Certainly both words were known before, although India was the more general term for these auriferous regions of



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the west, which, more than a century long, had been open to European adventure, while the land, baptized in honour of the throned Vestal, had been already made familiar to European ears by the exploits of Raleigh. But it was not till 1607 that Jamestown was founded, that Captain John Smith's adventures with Powhattan, "emperor of Virginia," and his daughter the Princess Pocahontas, became fashionable topics in England, that the English attempts to sail up the Chickahominy to the Pacific Ocean—as abortive as those of the Netherlanders to sail across the North Pole to Cathay—were creating scientific discussion in Europe, and that the first cargo of imaginary gold dust was exported from the James River.

With the adventurous minds of England all aflame with enthusiasm for those golden regions, with the thick-coming fancies for digging, washing, refining the precious sands of Virginia rivers, it was certain that a great rent was now to be made in the Borgian grant. It was inevitable that the rivalry of the Netherlanders should be excited by the achievements and the marvellous tales of Englishmen beyond the Atlantic, and that they too should claim their share of traffic with that golden and magnificent Unknown which was called America. The rivalry between England and Holland, already so conspicuous in the spicy Archipelagos of the east, was now to be extended over the silvery regions of the west. The two leading commercial powers of the Old World were now to begin their great struggle for supremacy in the western hemisphere.

A charter for what was called a West India Company was accordingly granted by the States-General. West India was understood to extend from the French settlements in Newfoundland or Acadia, along the American coast to the Straits of Magellan, and so around to the South Sea, including the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, besides all of Africa lying between the tropic of Cancer and the Cape of Good Hope. At least, within those limits the West India Company was to have monopoly of trade, all other Netherlanders being warned off the precincts. Nothing could be more magnificent, nor more vague.

The charter was for thirty-six years. The company was to maintain armies and fleets, to build forts and cities, to carry on war, to make treaties of peace and of commerce. It was a small peripatetic republic of merchants and mariners, evolved out of the mother republic—which had at last established its position among the powers of Christendom—and it was to begin its career full grown and in full armour.

The States-General were to furnish the company at starting with one million of florins and with twenty ships of war. The company was to add twenty other ships. The Government was to consist of four chambers of directors. One-half the capital was to be contributed by the chamber of Amsterdam, one-quarter by that of Zeeland, one-eighth respectively by the chambers of the Meuse and of North Holland.

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The chambers of Amsterdam, of Zeeland, of the Meuse, and of North Holland were to have respectively thirty, eighteen, fifteen, and fifteen directors. Of these seventy-eight, one-third were to be replaced every sixth year by others, while from the whole number seventeen persons were to be elected as a permanent board of managers. Dividends were to be made as soon as the earnings amounted to ten per cent. on the capital. Maritime judges were to decide upon prizes, the proceeds of which were not to be divided for six years, in order that war might be self-sustaining. Afterwards, the treasury of the United Provinces should receive one-tenth, Prince Maurice one-thirtieth, and the merchant stockholders the remainder. Governors and generals were to take the oath of fidelity to the States-General. The merchandize of the company was to be perpetually free of taxation, so far as regarded old duties, and exempt from war-taxes for the first twenty years.

Very violent and conflicting were the opinions expressed throughout the republic in regard to this project. It was urged by those most in favour of it that the chief sources of the greatness of Spain would be thus transferred to the States-General; for there could be no doubt that the Hollanders, unconquerable at sea, familiar with every ocean-path, and whose hardy constitutions defied danger and privation and the extremes of heat and cold, would easily supplant the more delicately organized adventurers from Southern Europe, already enervated by the exhausting climate of America. Moreover, it was idle for Spain to attempt the defence of so vast a portion of the world. Every tribe over which she had exercised sway would furnish as many allies for the Dutch company as it numbered men; for to obey and to hate the tyrannical Spaniard were one. The republic would acquire, in reality, the grandeur which with Spain was but an empty boast, would have the glory of transferring the great war beyond the limits of home into those far distant possessions, where the enemy deemed himself most secure, and would teach the true religion to savages sunk in their own superstitions, and still further depraved by the imported idolatries of Rome. Commerce was now world-wide, and the time had come for the Netherlanders, to whom the ocean belonged, to tear out from the pompous list of the Catholic king's titles his appellation of Lord of the Seas.

There were others, however, whose language was not so sanguine. They spoke with a shiver of the inhabitants of America, who hated all men, simply because they were men, or who had never manifested any love for their species except as an article of food. To convert such cannibals to Christianity and Calvinism would be a hopeless endeavour, and meanwhile the Spaniards were masters of the country. The attempt to blockade half the globe with forty galleots was insane; for, although the enemy had not occupied the whole territory, he commanded every harbour and position of vantage. Men, scarcely able to defend inch by inch the meagre little sandbanks of their fatherland, who should now go forth in hopes to conquer the world, were but walking in their sleep. They would awake to the consciousness of ruin.



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Thus men in the United Provinces spake of America. Especially Barneveld had been supposed to be prominent among the opponents of the new Company, on the ground that the more violently commercial ambition excited itself towards wider and wilder fields of adventure, the fainter grew inclinations for peace. The Advocate, who was all but omnipotent in Holland and Zeeland, subsequently denied the imputation of hostility to the new corporation, but the establishment of the West India Company, although chartered, was postponed.

The archdukes had not been discouraged by the result of their first attempts at negotiation, for Wittenhorst had reported a disposition towards peace as prevalent in the rebellious provinces, so far as he had contrived, during his brief mission, to feel the public pulse.

On the 6th February, 1607, Werner Cruwel, an insolvent tradesman of Brussels, and a relative of Recorder Aerssens, father of the envoy at Paris, made his appearance very unexpectedly at the house of his kinsman at the Hague. Sitting at the dinner-table, but neither eating nor drinking, he was asked by his host what troubled him. He replied that he had a load on his breast. Aerssens begged him, if it was his recent bankruptcy that oppressed him, to use philosophy and patience. The merchant answered that he who confessed well was absolved well. He then took from his pocket-book a letter from President Richardot, and said he would reveal what he had to say after dinner. The cloth being removed, and the wife and children of Aerssens having left the room, Cruwel disclosed that he had been sent by Richardot and Father Neyen on a secret mission. The recorder, much amazed and troubled, refused to utter a word, save to ask if Cruwel would object to confer with the Advocate. The merchant expressing himself as ready for such an interview, the recorder, although it was late, immediately sent a message to the great statesman. Barneveld was in bed and asleep, but was aroused to receive the communication of Aerssens. "We live in such a calumnious time," said the recorder, "that many people believe that you and I know more of the recent mission of Wittenhorst than we admit. You had best interrogate Cruwel in the presence of witnesses. I know not the man's humour, but it seems to me since his failure, that, in spite of his shy and lumpish manner, he is false and cunning."

The result was a secret interview, on the 8th February, between Prince Maurice, Barneveld, and the recorder, in which Cruwel was permitted to state the object of his mission. He then produced a short memorandum, signed by Spinola and by Father Neyen, to the effect that the archdukes were willing to treat for a truce of ten or twelve years, on the sole condition that the States would abstain from the India navigation. He exhibited also another paper, signed only by Neyen, in which that friar proposed to come secretly to the Hague, no one in Brussels to know of the visit save

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the archdukes and Spinola; and all in the United Provinces to be equally ignorant except the prince, the Advocate, and the recorder. Cruwel was then informed that if Neyen expected to discuss such grave matters with the prince, he must first send in a written proposal that could go on all fours and deserve attention. A week afterwards Cruwel came back with a paper in which Neyen declared himself authorized by the archdukes to treat with the States on the basis of their liberty and independence, and to ask what they would give in return for so great a concession as this renunciation of all right to “the so-called United Provinces.”

This being a step in advance, it was decided to permit the visit of Neyen. It was, however, the recorded opinion of the distinguished personages to whom the proposal was made that it was a trick and a deception. The archdukes would, no doubt, it was said, nominally recognise the provinces as a free State, but without really meaning it. Meantime, they would do their best to corrupt the Government and to renew the war after the republic had by this means been separated from its friends.

John Neyen, father commissary of the Franciscans, who had thus invited himself to the momentous conference, was a very smooth Flemish friar, who seemed admirably adapted, for various reasons, to glide into the rebel country and into the hearts of the rebels. He was a Netherlander, born at Antwerp, when Antwerp was a portion of the united commonwealth, of a father who had been in the confidential service of William the Silent. He was eloquent in the Dutch language, and knew the character of the Dutch people. He had lived much at court, both in Madrid and Brussels, and was familiar with the ways of kings and courtiers. He was a holy man, incapable of a thought of worldly advancement for himself, but he was a master of the logic often thought most conclusive in those days; no man insinuating golden arguments more adroitly than he into half-reluctant palms. Blessed with a visage of more than Flemish frankness, he had in reality a most wily and unscrupulous disposition. Insensible to contumely, and incapable of accepting a rebuff, he could wind back to his purpose when less supple negotiators would have been crushed.

He was described by his admirers as uniting the wisdom of the serpent with the guilelessness of the dove. Who better than he then, in this double capacity, to coil himself around the rebellion, and to carry the olive-branch in his mouth?

On the 25th February the monk, disguised in the dress of a burgher, arrived at Ryswick, a village a mile and a half from the Hague. He was accompanied on the journey by Cruwel, and they gave themselves out as travelling tradesmen. After nightfall, a carriage having been sent to the hostelry, according to secret agreement, by Recorder Aerssens, John Neyen was brought to the Hague. The friar, as he was driven on through these hostile regions, was somewhat



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startled, on looking out, to find himself accompanied by two mounted musketeers on each side of the carriage, but they proved to have been intended as a protective escort. He was brought to the recorder's house, whence, after some delay, he was conveyed to the palace. Here he was received by an unknown and silent attendant, who took him by the hand and led him through entirely deserted corridors and halls. Not a human being was seen nor a sound heard until his conductor at last reached the door of an inner apartment through which he ushered him, without speaking a syllable. The monk then found himself in the presence of two personages, seated at a table covered with books and papers. One was in military undress, with an air about him of habitual command, a fair-complexioned man of middle age, inclining to baldness, rather stout, with a large blue eye, regular features, and a mouse-coloured beard. The other was in the velvet cloak and grave habiliments of a civil functionary, apparently sixty years of age, with a massive features, and a shaggy beard. The soldier was Maurice of Nassau, the statesman was John of Olden-Barneveld.

Both rose as the friar entered, and greeted him with cordiality.

"But," said the prince, "how did you dare to enter the Hague, relying only on the word of a Beggar?"

"Who would not confide," replied Neyen, "in the word of so exalted, so respectable a Beggar as you, O most excellent prince?"

With these facetious words began the negotiations through which an earnest attempt was at last to be made for terminating a seemingly immortal war. The conversation, thus begun, rolled amicably and informally along. The monk produced letters from the archdukes, in which, as he stated, the truly royal soul of the writers shone conspicuously forth. Without a thought for their own advantage, he observed, and moved only by a contemplation of the tears shed by so many thousands of beings reduced to extreme misery, their Highnesses, although they were such exalted princes, cared nothing for what would be said by the kings of Europe and all the potentates of the universe about their excessive indulgence."

"What indulgence do you speak of?" asked the stadholder.

"Does that seem a trifling indulgence," replied John Neyen, "that they are willing to abandon the right which they inherited from their ancestors over these provinces, to allow it so easily to slip from their fingers, to declare these people to be free, over whom, as their subjects refusing the yoke, they have carried on war so long?"

"It is our right hands that have gained this liberty," said Maurice, "not the archdukes that have granted it. It has been acquired by our treasure, poured forth how freely! by the



price of our blood, by so many thousands of souls sent to their account. Alas, how dear a price have we paid for it! All the potentates of Christendom, save the King of Spain alone, with his relatives the archdukes, have assented to our independence. In treating for peace we ask no gift of freedom from the archdukes. We claim to be regarded by them as what we are—free men. If they are unwilling to consider us as such, let them subject us to their dominion if they can. And as we have hitherto done, we shall contend more fiercely for liberty than for life.”

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With this, the tired monk was dismissed to sleep off the effects of his journey and of the protracted discussion, being warmly recommended to the captain of the citadel, by whom he was treated with every possible consideration.

Several days of private discussion ensued between Neyen and the leading personages of the republic. The emissary was looked upon with great distrust. All schemes of substantial negotiation were regarded by the public as visions, while the monk on his part felt the need of all his tact and temper to wind his way out of the labyrinth into which he felt that he had perhaps too heedlessly entered. A false movement on his part would involve himself and his masters in a hopeless maze of suspicion, and make a pacific result impossible.

At length, it having been agreed to refer the matter to the States-General, Recorder Aerssens waited upon Neyen to demand his credentials for negotiation. He replied that he had been forbidden to deliver his papers, but that he was willing to exhibit them to the States-General.

He came accordingly to that assembly, and was respectfully received. All the deputies rose, and he was placed in a seat near the presiding officer. Olden-Barneveld then in a few words told him why he had been summoned. The monk begged that a want of courtesy might not be imputed to him, as he had been sent to negotiate with three individuals, not with a great assembly.

Thus already the troublesome effect of publicity upon diplomacy was manifesting itself. The many-headed, many-tongued republic was a difficult creature to manage, adroit as the negotiator had proved himself to be in gliding through the cabinets and council-chambers of princes and dealing with the important personages found there.

The power was, however, produced, and handed around the assembly, the signature and seals being duly inspected by the members. Neyen was then asked if he had anything to say in public. He replied in the negative, adding only a few vague commonplaces about the effusion of blood and the desire of the archdukes for the good of mankind. He was then dismissed.

A few days afterwards a committee of five from the States-General, of which Barneveld was chairman, conferred with Neyen. He was informed that the paper exhibited by him was in many respects objectionable, and that they had therefore drawn up a form which he was requested to lay before the archdukes for their guidance in making out a new power. He was asked also whether the king of Spain was a party to these proposals for negotiation. The monk answered that he was not informed of the fact, but that he considered it highly probable.



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John Neyen then departed for Brussels with the form prescribed by the States-General in his pocket. Nothing could exceed the indignation with which the royalists and Catholics at the court of the archdukes were inspired by the extreme arrogance and obstinacy thus manifested by the rebellious heretics. That the offer on the part of their master to negotiate should be received by them with cavils, and almost with contempt, was as great an offence as their original revolt. That the servant should dare to prescribe a form for the sovereign to copy seemed to prove that the world was coming to an end. But it was ever thus with the vulgar, said the courtiers and church dignitaries, debating these matters. The insanity of plebeians was always enormous, and never more so than when fortune for a moment smiled. Full of arrogance and temerity when affairs were prosperous, plunged in abject cowardice when dangers and reverses came—such was the People—such it must ever be.

Thus blustered the priests and the parasites surrounding the archduke, nor need their sentiments amaze us. Could those honest priests and parasites have ever dreamed, before the birth of this upstart republic, that merchants, manufacturers, and farmers, mechanics and advocates—the People, in short—should presume to meddle with affairs of state? Their vocation had been long ago prescribed—to dig and to draw, to brew and to bake, to bear burdens in peace and to fill bloody graves in war—what better lot could they desire?

Meantime their superiors, especially endowed with wisdom by the Omnipotent, would direct trade and commerce, conduct war and diplomacy, make treaties, impose taxes, fill their own pockets, and govern the universe. Was not this reasonable and according to the elemental laws? If the beasts of the field had been suddenly gifted with speech, and had constituted themselves into a free commonwealth for the management of public affairs, they would hardly have caused more profound astonishment at Brussels and Madrid than had been excited by the proceedings of the rebellious Dutchmen.

Yet it surely might have been suggested, when the lament of the courtiers over the abjectness of the People in adversity was so emphatic, that Dorp and Van Loon, Berendrecht and Gieselles, with the men under their command, who had disputed every inch of Little Troy for three years and three months, and had covered those fatal sands with a hundred thousand corpses, had not been giving of late such evidence of the People's cowardice in reverses as theory required. The siege of Ostend had been finished only three years before, and it is strange that its lessons should so soon have been forgotten.

It was thought best, however, to dissemble. Diplomacy in those days—certainly the diplomacy of Spain and Rome—meant simply dissimulation. Moreover, that solid apothegm, 'haereticis non servanda fides,' the most serviceable anchor ever forged for true believers, was always ready to be thrown out, should storm or quicksand threaten, during the intricate voyage to be now undertaken.



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John Neyen soon returned to the Hague, having persuaded his masters that it was best to affect compliance with the preliminary demand of the States. During the discussions in regard to peace, it would not be dangerous to treat with the rebel provinces as with free states, over which the archdukes pretended to no authority, because—so it was secretly argued—this was to be understood with a sense of similitude. “We will negotiate with them as if they were free,” said the greyfriar to the archduke and his counsellors, “but not with the signification of true and legitimate liberty. They have laid down in their formula that we are to pretend to no authority over them. Very well. For the time being we will pretend that we do not pretend to any such authority. To negotiate with them as if they were free will not make them free. It is no recognition by us that they are free. Their liberty could never be acquired by their rebellion. This is so manifest that neither the king nor the archdukes can lose any of their rights over the United Provinces, even should they make this declaration.”

Thus the hair-sputters at Brussels—spinning a web that should be stout enough to entrap the noisy, blundering republicans at the Hague, yet so delicate as to go through the finest dialectical needle. Time was to show whether subtilty or bluntness was the best diplomatic material.

The monk brought with him three separate instruments or powers, to be used according to his discretion. Admitted to the assembly of the States-General, he produced number one.

It was instantly rejected. He then offered number two, with the same result. He now declared himself offended, not on his own account, but for the sake of his masters, and asked leave to retire from the assembly, leaving with them the papers which had been so benignantly drawn up, and which deserved to be more carefully studied.

The States, on their parts, were sincerely and vehemently indignant. What did all this mean, it was demanded, this producing one set of propositions after another? Why did the archdukes not declare their intentions openly and at once? Let the States depart each to the several provinces, and let John Neyen be instantly sent out of the country. Was it thought to bait a trap for the ingenuous Netherlanders, and catch them little by little, like so many wild animals? This was not the way the States dealt with the archdukes. What they meant they put in front— first, last, and always. Now and in the future they said and they would say exactly what they wished, candidly and seriously. Those who pursued another course would never come into negotiation with them.

The monk felt that he had excited a wrath which it would be difficult to assuage. He already perceived the difference between a real and an affected indignation, and tried to devise some soothing remedy. Early next morning he sent a petition in writing to the States for leave to make an explanation to the assembly. Barneveld and Recorder Aerssens, in consequence, came to him immediately, and heaped invectives upon his head for his duplicity.

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Evidently it was a different matter dealing with this many-headed roaring beast, calling itself a republic, from managing the supple politicians with whom he was more familiar. The noise and publicity of these transactions were already somewhat appalling to the smooth friar who was accustomed to negotiate in comfortable secrecy. He now vehemently protested that never man was more sincere than he, and implored for time to send to Brussels for another power. It is true that number three was still in his portfolio, but he had seen so much indignation on the production of number two as to feel sure that the fury of the States would know no bounds should he now confess that he had come provided with a third.

It was agreed accordingly to wait eight days, in which period he might send for and receive the new power already in his possession. These little tricks were considered masterly diplomacy in those days, and by this kind of negotiators; and such was the way in which it was proposed to terminate a half century of warfare.

[The narrative is the monk's own, as preserved by his admirer, the Jesuit Gallucci, (*ubi sup.*)]

The friar wrote to his masters, not of course to ask for a new power, but to dilate on the difficulties to be anticipated in procuring that which the losing party is always most bent upon in circumstances like these, and which was most ardently desired by the archdukes—an armistice. He described Prince Maurice as sternly opposed to such a measure, believing that temporary cessation of hostilities was apt to be attended with mischievous familiarity between the opposing camps, with relaxation of discipline, desertion, and various kinds of treachery, and that there was no better path to peace than that which was trampled by contending hosts.

Seven days passed, and then Neyen informed the States that he had at last received a power which he hoped would prove satisfactory. Being admitted accordingly to the assembly, he delivered an eloquent eulogy upon the sincerity of the archdukes, who, with perhaps too little regard for their own dignity and authority, had thus, for the sake of the public good, so benignantly conceded what the States had demanded.

Barneveld, on receiving the new power, handed to Neyen a draught of an agreement which he was to study at his leisure, and in which he might suggest alterations. At the same time it was demanded that within three months the written consent of the King of Spain to the proposed negotiations should be produced. The Franciscan objected that it did not comport with the dignity of the archdukes to suppose the consent of any other sovereign needful to confirm their acts. Barneveld insisted with much vehemence on the necessity of this condition. It was perfectly notorious, he said, that the armies commanded by the archdukes were subject to the King of Spain, and were called royal armies. Prince Maurice observed that all prisoners taken by him had uniformly called themselves soldiers of the Crown, not of the archdukes, nor of Marquis Spinola.

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Barneveld added that the royal power over the armies in the Netherlands and over the obedient provinces was proved by the fact that all commanders of regiments, all governors of fortresses, especially of Antwerp, Ghent, Cambray, and the like, were appointed by the King of Spain. These were royal citadels with royal garrisons. That without the knowledge and consent of the King of Spain it would be impossible to declare the United Provinces free, was obvious; for in the cession by Philip II. of all the Netherlands it was provided that, without the consent of the king, no part of that territory could be ceded, and this on pain of forfeiting all the sovereignty. To treat without the king was therefore impossible.

The Franciscan denied that because the sovereigns of Spain sent funds and auxiliary troops to Flanders, and appointed military commanders there of various degrees, the authority of the archdukes was any the less supreme. Philip II. had sent funds and troops to sustain the League, but he was not King of France.

Barneveld probably thought it not worth his while to reply that Philip, with those funds and those troops, had done his best to become King of France, and that his failure proved nothing for the argument either way.

Neyen then returned once more to Brussels, observing as he took leave that the decision of the archdukes as to the king's consent was very doubtful, although he was sure that the best thing for all parties would be to agree to an armistice out of hand.

This, however, was far from being the opinion of the States or the stadholder.

After conferring with his masters, the monk came down by agreement from Antwerp to the Dutch ships which lay in the Scheld before Fort Lillo. On board one of these, Dirk van der Does had been stationed with a special commission from the States to compare documents. It was expressly ordered that in these preliminary negotiations neither party was to go on shore. On a comparison of the agreement brought by Neyen from Brussels with the draught furnished by Barneveld, of which Van der Does had a copy, so many discrepancies appeared that the document of the archdukes was at once rejected. But of course the monk had a number two, and this, after some trouble, was made to agree with the prescribed form. Brother John then, acting upon what he considered the soundest of principles—that no job was so difficult as not to be accomplished with the help of the precious metals—offered his fellow negotiator a valuable gold chain as a present from the archdukes. Dirk van der Does accepted the chain, but gave notice of the fact to his Government.



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The monk now became urgent to accompany his friend to the Hague, but this had been expressly forbidden by the States. Neyen felt sure, he said, of being able by arguments, which he could present by word of mouth, to overcome the opposition to the armistice were he once more to be admitted to the assembly. Van der Does had already much overstaid his appointed time, bound to the spot, as it were, by the golden chain thrown around him by the excellent friar, and he now, in violation of orders, wrote to the Hague for leave to comply with this request. Pending the answer, the persuasive Neyen convinced him, much against his will, that they might both go together as far as Delft. To Delft they accordingly went; but, within half a league of that place, met a courier with strict orders that the monk was at once to return to Brussels. Brother John was in great agitation. Should he go back, the whole negotiation might come to nought; should he go on, he might be clapped into prison as a spy. Being conscious, however, that his services as a spy were intended to be the most valuable part of his mission, he resolved to proceed in that capacity. So he persuaded his friend Dirk to hide him in the hold of a canal-boat. Van der Does was in great trepidation himself, but on reaching the Hague and giving up his gold chain to Barneveld, he made his peace, and obtained leave for the trembling but audacious friar to come out of his hiding-place.

Appearing once more before the States-General on the afternoon of 7th May, Neyen urged with much eloquence the propriety of an immediate armistice both by sea and land, insisting that it would be a sanguinary farce to establish a cessation of hostilities upon one element while blood and treasure were profusely flowing on the oceans. There were potent reasons for this earnestness on the part of the monk to procure a truce to maritime operations, as very soon was to be made evident to the world. Meantime, on this renewed visit, the negotiator expressed himself as no longer doubtful in regard to the propriety of requesting the Spanish king's consent to the proposed negotiations. That consent, however, would in his opinion depend upon the earnestness now to be manifested by the States in establishing the armistice by sea and land, and upon their promptness in recalling the fleets now infesting the coast of Spain. No immediate answer was given to these representations, but Neyen was requested to draw up his argument in writing, in order that it might be duly pondered by the States of the separate provinces.

The radical defect of the Dutch constitution—the independent sovereignty claimed by each one of the provinces composing the confederation, each of those provinces on its part being composed of cities, each again claiming something very like sovereignty for itself—could not fail to be manifested whenever, great negotiations with foreign powers were to be undertaken. To obtain the unanimous consent

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of seven independent little republics was a work of difficulty, requiring immense expenditure of time in comparatively unimportant contingencies. How intolerable might become the obstructions, the dissensions, and the delays, now that a series of momentous and world-wide transactions was beginning, on the issue of which the admission of a new commonwealth into the family of nations, the international connections of all the great powers of Christendom, the commerce of the world, and the peace of Europe depended.

Yet there was no help for it but to make the best present use of the institutions which time and great events had bestowed upon the young republic, leaving to a more convenient season the task of remodelling the law. Meanwhile, with men who knew their own minds, who meant to speak the truth, and who were resolved to gather in at last the harvest honestly and bravely gained by nearly a half-century of hard fighting, it would be hard for a legion of friars, with their heads full of quirks and their wallets full of bills of exchange, to carry the day for despotism.

Barneveld was sincerely desirous of peace. He was well aware that his province of Holland, where he was an intellectual autocrat, was staggering under the burden of one half the expenses of the whole republic. He knew that Holland in the course of the last nine years, notwithstanding the constantly heightened rate of impost on all objects of ordinary consumption, was twenty-six millions of florins behindhand, and that she had reason therefore to wish for peace. The great Advocate, than whom no statesman in Europe could more accurately scan the world's horizon, was convinced that the propitious moment for honourable straightforward negotiations to secure peace, independence, and free commerce, free religion and free government, had come, and he had succeeded in winning the reluctant Maurice into a partial adoption, at least, of his opinions.

The Franciscan remained at Delft, waiting, by direction of the States, for an answer to his propositions, and doing his best according to the instructions of his own Government to espy the condition and sentiments of the enemy. Becoming anxious after the lapse of a fortnight, he wrote to Barneveld. In reply the Advocate twice sent a secret messenger, urging, him to be patient, assuring him that the affair was working well; that the opposition to peace came chiefly from Zeeland and from certain parties in Amsterdam vehemently opposed to peace or truce; but that the rest of Holland was decidedly in favour of the negotiations.

A few days passed, and Neyen was again summoned before the assembly. Barneveld now informed him that the Dutch fleet would be recalled from the coast of Spain so soon as the consent of his Catholic Majesty to the negotiations arrived, but that it would be necessary to confine the cessation of naval warfare within certain local limits. Both these conditions were strenuously opposed by the Franciscan, who urged that the



consent of the Spanish king was certain, but that this new proposition to localize the maritime armistice would prove to be fraught with endless difficulties and dangers. Barneveld and the States remaining firm, however, and giving him a formal communication of their decision in writing, Neyen had nothing for it but to wend his way back rather malcontent to Brussels.

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It needed but a brief deliberation at the court of the archdukes to bring about the desired arrangement. The desire for an armistice, especially for a cessation of hostilities by sea, had been marvellously stimulated by an event to be narrated in the next chapter. Meantime, more than the first three months of the year had been passed in these secret preliminary transactions, and so softly had the stealthy friar sped to and fro between Brussels and the Hague, that when at last the armistice was announced it broke forth like a sudden flash of fine weather in the midst of a raging storm. No one at the archduke's court knew of the mysterious negotiations save the monk himself, Spinola, Richardot, Verreycken, the chief auditor, and one or two others. The great Belgian nobles, from whom everything had been concealed, were very wroth, but the Belgian public was as much delighted as amazed at the prospects of peace. In the United Provinces opinions were conflicting, but doubtless joy and confidence were the prevailing emotions.

Towards the middle of April the armistice was publicly announced. It was to last for eight months from the 4th of May. During this period no citadels were to be besieged, no camps brought near a city, no new fortifications built, and all troops were to be kept carefully within walls. Meantime commissioners were to be appointed by the archdukes to confer with an equal number of deputies of the United Provinces for peace or for a truce of ten, fifteen, or twenty years, on the express ground that the archdukes regarded the United Provinces as free countries, over which their Highnesses pretended to no authority.

The armistice on land was absolute. On sea, hostilities were to cease in the German Ocean and in the channel between England and France, while it was also provided that the Netherland fleet should, within a certain period, be recalled from the Spanish coast.

A day of public fast, humiliation, thanksgiving, and prayer was ordered throughout the republic for the 9th of May, in order to propitiate the favour of Heaven on the great work to be undertaken; and, as a further precaution, Prince Maurice ordered all garrisons in the strong places to be doubled, lest the slippery enemy should take advantage of too much confidence reposed in his good faith. The preachers throughout the commonwealth, each according to his individual bias, improved the occasion by denouncing the Spaniard from their pulpits and inflaming the popular hatred against the ancient enemy, or by dilating on the blessings of peace and the horrors of war. The peace party and the war party, the believers in Barneveld and the especial adherents of Prince Maurice, seemed to divide the land in nearly equal portions.

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While the Netherlands, both rebellious and obedient, were filled with these various emotions, the other countries of Europe were profoundly amazed at the sudden revelation. It was on the whole regarded as a confession of impotence on the part of Spain that the archdukes should now prepare to send envoys to the revolted provinces as to a free and independent people. Universal monarchy, brought to such a pass as this, was hardly what had been expected after the tremendous designs and the grandiloquent language on which the world had so long been feeding as its daily bread. The spectacle of anointed monarchs thus far humbling themselves to the people of rebellion dictating terms, instead of writhing in dust at the foot of the throne—was something new in history. The heavens and earth might soon be expected to pass away, now that such a catastrophe was occurring.

The King of France had also been kept in ignorance of these events. It was impossible, however, that the negotiations could go forward without his consent and formal participation. Accordingly on receiving the news he appointed an especial mission to the Hague—President Jeannin and De Russy, besides his regular resident ambassador Buzanval. Meantime startling news reached the republic in the early days of May.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A penal offence in the republic to talk of peace or of truce
Accepting a new tyrant in place of the one so long ago deposed
As if they were free will not make them free
As neat a deception by telling the truth
Cargo of imaginary gold dust was exported from the James River
Delay often fights better than an army against a foreign invader
Diplomacy of Spain and Rome—meant simply dissimulation
Draw a profit out of the necessities of this state
England hated the Netherlands
Friendly advice still more intolerable
Haereticis non servanda fides
He who confessed well was absolved well
Insensible to contumely, and incapable of accepting a rebuff
Languor of fatigue, rather than any sincere desire for peace
Much as the blind or the deaf towards colour or music
Subtle and dangerous enemy who wore the mask of a friend
Word peace in Spanish mouths simply meant the Holy Inquisition

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