

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1607a eBook

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1607a by John Lothrop Motley

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HISTORY OF THE UNITED NETHERLANDS From the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce—1609

By John Lothrop Motley

MOTLEY'S HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS, Project Gutenberg Edition, Vol. 79

History of the United Netherlands, 1607

CHAPTER XLVII.

A Dutch fleet under Heemskerk sent to the coast of Spain and Portugal—Encounter with the Spanish war fleet under D'Avila—Death of both commanders-in-chief—Victory of the Netherlands—Massacre of the Spaniards.

The States-General had not been inclined to be tranquil under the check which Admiral Haultain had received upon the coast of Spain in the autumn of 1606. The deed of terrible self-devotion by which Klaaszoon and his comrades had in that crisis saved the reputation of the republic, had proved that her fleets needed only skilful handling and determined leaders to conquer their enemy in the Western seas as certainly as they had done in the archipelagos of the East. And there was one pre-eminent naval

commander, still in the very prime of life, but seasoned by an experience at the poles and in the tropics such as few mariners in that early but expanding maritime epoch could boast. Jacob van Heemskerk, unlike many of the navigators and ocean warriors who had made and were destined to make the Orange flag of the United Provinces illustrious over the world, was not of humble parentage. Sprung of an ancient, knightly race, which had frequently distinguished itself in his native province of Holland, he had followed the seas almost from his cradle. By turns a commercial voyager, an explorer, a privateer's-man, or an admiral of war-fleets, in days when sharp distinctions between the merchant service and the public service, corsairs' work and cruisers' work, did not exist, he had ever proved himself equal to any emergency—a man incapable of fatigue, of perplexity, or of fear. We have followed his career during that awful winter in Nova Zembla, where,

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with such unflinching cheerful heroism, he sustained the courage of his comrades—the first band of scientific martyrs that had ever braved the dangers and demanded the secrets of those arctic regions. His glorious name—as those of so many of his comrades and countrymen—has been rudely torn from cape, promontory, island, and continent, once illustrated by courage and suffering, but the noble record will ever remain.

Subsequently he had much navigated the Indian ocean; his latest achievement having been, with two hundred men, in a couple of yachts, to capture an immense Portuguese carrack, mounting thirty guns, and manned with eight hundred sailors, and to bring back a prodigious booty for the exchequer of the republic. A man with delicate features, large brown eyes, a thin high nose, fair hair and beard, and a soft, gentle expression, he concealed, under a quiet exterior, and on ordinary occasions a very plain and pacific costume, a most daring nature, and an indomitable ambition for military and naval distinction.

He was the man of all others in the commonwealth to lead any new enterprise that audacity could conceive against the hereditary enemy.

The public and the States-General were anxious to retrace the track of Haultain, and to efface the memory of his inglorious return from the Spanish coast. The sailors of Holland and Zeeland were indignant that the richly freighted fleets of the two Indies had been allowed to slip so easily through their fingers. The great East India Corporation was importunate with Government that such blunders should not be repeated, and that the armaments known to be preparing in the Portuguese ports, the homeward-bound fleets that might be looked for at any moment off the peninsular coast, and the Spanish cruisers which were again preparing to molest the merchant fleets of the Company, should be dealt with effectively and in season.

Twenty-six vessels of small size but of good sailing qualities, according to the idea of the epoch, were provided, together with four tenders. Of this fleet the command was offered to Jacob van Heemskerck. He accepted with alacrity, expressing with his usual quiet self-confidence the hope that, living or dead, his fatherland would have cause to thank him. Inspired only by the love of glory, he asked for no remuneration for his services save thirteen per cent. of the booty, after half a million florins should have been paid into the public treasury. It was hardly probable that this would prove a large share of prize money, while considerable victories alone could entitle him to receive a stiver.

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The expedition sailed in the early days of April for the coast of Spain and Portugal, the admiral having full discretion to do anything that might in his judgment redound to the advantage of the republic. Next in command was the vice-admiral of Zeeland, Laurenz Alteras. Another famous seaman in the fleet was Captain Henry Janszoon of Amsterdam, commonly called Long Harry, while the weather-beaten and well-beloved Admiral Lambert, familiarly styled by his countrymen "Pretty Lambert," some of whose achievements have already been recorded in these pages, was the comrade of all others upon whom Heemskerk most depended. After the 10th April the admiral, lying off and on near the mouth of the Tagus, sent a lugger in trading disguise to reconnoitre that river. He ascertained by his spies, sent in this and subsequently in other directions, as well as by occasional merchantmen spoken with at sea, that the Portuguese fleet for India would not be ready to sail for many weeks; that no valuable argosies were yet to be looked for from America, but that a great war-fleet, comprising many galleons of the largest size, was at that very moment cruising in the Straits of Gibraltar. Such of the Netherland traders as were returning from the Levant, as well as those designing to enter the Mediterranean, were likely to fall prizes to this formidable enemy. The heart of Jacob Heemskerk danced for joy. He had come forth for glory, not for booty, and here was what he had scarcely dared to hope for—a powerful antagonist instead of peaceful, scarcely resisting, but richly-laden merchantmen. The accounts received were so accurate as to assure him that the Gibraltar fleet was far superior to his own in size of vessels, weight of metal, and number of combatants. The circumstances only increased his eagerness. The more he was over-matched, the greater would be the honour of victory, and he steered for the straits, tacking to and fro in the teeth of a strong head-wind.

On the morning of the 25th April he was in the narrowest part of the mountain-channel, and learned that the whole Spanish fleet was in the Bay of Gibraltar.

The marble pillar of Hercules rose before him. Heemskerk was of a poetic temperament, and his imagination was inflamed by the spectacle which met his eyes. Geographical position, splendour of natural scenery, immortal fable, and romantic history, had combined to throw a spell over that region. It seemed marked out for perpetual illustration by human valour. The deeds by which, many generations later, those localities were to become identified with the fame of a splendid empire—then only the most energetic rival of the young republic, but destined under infinitely better geographical conditions to follow on her track of empire, and with far more prodigious results—were still in the womb of futurity. But St. Vincent, Trafalgar, Gibraltar—words which were one day to stir the English heart, and to conjure heroic English shapes from the depths so long as history endures—were capes and promontories already familiar to legend and romance.

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Those Netherlanders had come forth from their slender little fatherland to offer battle at last within his own harbours and under his own fortresses to the despot who aspired to universal monarchy, and who claimed the lordship of the seas. The Hollanders and Zeelanders had gained victories on the German Ocean, in the Channel, throughout the Indies, but now they were to measure strength with the ancient enemy in this most conspicuous theatre, and before the eyes of Christendom. It was on this famous spot that the ancient demigod had torn asunder by main strength the continents of Europe and Africa. There stood the opposite fragments of the riven mountain-chain, Calpe and Abyla, gazing at each other, in eternal separation, across the gulf, emblems of those two antagonistic races which the terrible hand of Destiny has so ominously disjoined. Nine centuries before, the African king, Moses son of Nuzir, and his lieutenant, Tarik son of Abdallah, had crossed that strait and burned the ships which brought them. Black Africa had conquered a portion of whiter Europe, and laid the foundation of the deadly mutual repugnance which nine hundred years of bloodshed had heightened into insanity of hatred. Tarik had taken the town and mountain, Carteia and Calpe, and given to both his own name. Gib-al-Tarik, the cliff of Tarik, they are called to this day.

Within the two horns of that beautiful bay, and protected by the fortress on the precipitous rock, lay the Spanish fleet at anchor. There were ten galleons of the largest size, besides lesser war-vessels and carracks, in all twenty-one sail. The admiral commanding was Don Juan Alvarez d'Avila, a veteran who had fought at Lepanto under Don John of Austria. His son was captain of his flag-ship, the St. Augustine. The vice-admiral's galleon was called 'Our Lady of La Vega,' the rear-admiral's was the 'Mother of God,' and all the other ships were baptized by the holy names deemed most appropriate, in the Spanish service, to deeds of carnage.

On the other hand, the nomenclature of the Dutch ships suggested a menagerie. There was the Tiger, the Sea Dog, the Griffin, the Red Lion, the Golden Lion, the Black Bear, the White Bear; these, with the AEolus and the Morning Star, were the leading vessels of the little fleet.

On first attaining a distant view of the enemy, Heemskerk summoned all the captains on board his flag-ship, the AEolus, and addressed them in a few stirring words.

"It is difficult," he said, "for Netherlanders not to conquer on salt water. Our fathers have gained many a victory in distant seas, but it is for us to tear from the enemy's list of titles his arrogant appellation of Monarch of the Ocean. Here, on the verge of two continents, Europe is watching our deeds, while the Moors of Africa are to learn for the first time in what estimation they are to hold the Batavian republic. Remember that you have no choice between triumph and destruction.

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I have led you into a position whence escape is impossible—and I ask of none of you more than I am prepared to do myself—whither I am sure that you will follow. The enemy's ships are far superior to ours in bulk; but remember that their excessive size makes them difficult to handle and easier to hit, while our own vessels are entirely within control. Their decks are swarming with men, and thus there will be more certainty that our shot will take effect. Remember, too, that we are all sailors, accustomed from our cradles to the ocean; while yonder Spaniards are mainly soldiers and landsmen, qualmish at the smell of bilgewater, and sickening at the roll of the waves. This day begins a long list of naval victories, which will make our fatherland for ever illustrious, or lay the foundation of an honourable peace, by placing, through our triumph, in the hands of the States-General, the power of dictating its terms."

His comrades long remembered the enthusiasm which flashed from the man, usually so gentle and composed in demeanour, so simple in attire. Clad in complete armour, with the orange-plumes waving from his casque and the orange-scarf across his breast, he stood there in front of the mainmast of the *AEolus*, the very embodiment of an ancient Viking.

He then briefly announced his plan of attack. It was of antique simplicity. He would lay his own ship alongside that of the Spanish admiral. *Pretty Lambert* in the *Tiger* was to grapple with her on the other side. Vice-admiral *Alteras* and Captain *Bras* were to attack the enemy's vice-admiral in the same way. Thus, two by two, the little *Netherland* ships were to come into closest quarters with each one of the great galleons. *Heemskerk* would himself lead the way, and all were to follow, as closely as possible, in his wake. The oath to stand by each other was then solemnly renewed, and a parting health was drunk. The captains then returned to their ships.

As the *Lepanto* warrior, *Don Juan d'Avila*, saw the little vessels slowly moving towards him, he summoned a Hollander whom he had on board, one *Skipper Gevaerts* of a captured Dutch trading bark, and asked him whether those ships in the distance were *Netherlanders*.

"Not a doubt of it," replied the skipper.

The admiral then asked him what their purpose could possibly be, in venturing so near *Gibraltar*.

"Either I am entirely mistaken in my countrymen," answered *Gevaerta*, "or they are coming for the express purpose of offering you battle."



The Spaniard laughed loud and long. The idea that those puny vessels could be bent on such a purpose seemed to him irresistibly comic, and he promised his prisoner, with much condescension, that the St. Augustine alone should sink the whole fleet.

Gevaerts, having his own ideas on the subject, but not being called upon to express them, thanked the admiral for his urbanity, and respectfully withdrew.

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At least four thousand soldiers were in D'Avila's ships, besides seamen. there were seven hundred in the St. Augustine, four hundred and fifty in Our Lady of Vega, and so on in proportion. There were also one or two hundred noble volunteers who came thronging on board, scenting the battle from afar, and desirous of having a hand in the destruction of the insolent Dutchmen.

It was about one in the afternoon. There was not much wind, but the Hollanders, slowly drifting on the eternal river that pours from the Atlantic into the Mediterranean, were now very near. All hands had been piped on board every one of the ships, all had gone down on their knees in humble prayer, and the loving cup had then been passed around.

Heemskerk, leading the way towards the Spanish admiral, ordered the gunners of the bolus not to fire until the vessels struck each other. "Wait till you hear it crack," he said, adding a promise of a hundred florins to the man who should pull down the admiral's flag. Avila, notwithstanding his previous merriment, thought it best, for the moment, to avoid the coming collision. Leaving to other galleons, which he interposed between himself and the enemy, the task of summarily sinking the Dutch fleet, he cut the cable of the St. Augustine and drifted farther into the bay. Heemskerk, not allowing himself to be foiled in his purpose, steered past two or three galleons, and came crashing against the admiral. Almost simultaneously, Pretty Lambert laid himself along her quarter on the other side. The St. Augustine fired into the AEolus as she approached, but without doing much damage. The Dutch admiral, as he was coming in contact, discharged his forward guns, and poured an effective volley of musketry into his antagonist.

The St. Augustine fired again, straight across the centre of the bolus, at a few yards' distance. A cannon-ball took off the head of a sailor, standing near Heemskerk, and carried away the admiral's leg, close to the body. He fell on deck, and, knowing himself to be mortally wounded, implored the next in command on board, Captain Verhoef, to fight his ship to the last, and to conceal his death from the rest of the fleet. Then prophesying a glorious victory for republic, and piously commending his soul to his Maker, he soon breathed his last. A cloak was thrown over him, and the battle raged. The few who were aware that the noble Heemskerk was gone, burned to avenge his death, and to obey the dying commands of their beloved chief. The rest of the Hollanders believed themselves under his directing influence, and fought as if his eyes were upon them. Thus the spirit of the departed hero still watched over and guided the battle.

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The AEolus now fired a broadside into her antagonist, making fearful havoc, and killing Admiral D'Avila. The commanders-in-chief of both contending fleets had thus fallen at the very beginning of the battle. While the St. Augustine was engaged in deadly encounter, yardarm and yardarm, with the AEolus and the Tiger, Vice-admiral Alteras had, however, not carried out his part of the plan. Before he could succeed in laying himself alongside of the Spanish vice-admiral, he had been attacked by two galleons. Three other Dutch ships, however, attacked the vice-admiral, and, after an obstinate combat, silenced all her batteries and set her on fire. Her conquerors were then obliged to draw off rather hastily, and to occupy themselves for a time in extinguishing their own burning sails, which had taken fire from the close contact with their enemy. Our Lady of Vega, all ablaze from top-gallant-mast to quarterdeck, floated helplessly about, a spectre of flame, her guns going off wildly, and her crew dashing themselves into the sea, in order to escape by drowning from a fiery death. She was consumed to the water's edge.

Meantime, Vice-admiral Alteras had successively defeated both his antagonists; drifting in with them until almost under the guns of the fortress, but never leaving them until, by his superior gunnery and seamanship, he had sunk one of them, and driven the other a helpless wreck on shore.

Long Harry, while Alteras had been thus employed, had engaged another great galleon, and set her on fire. She, too, was thoroughly burned to her hulk; but Admiral Harry was killed.

By this time, although it was early of an April afternoon, and heavy clouds of smoke, enveloping the combatants pent together in so small a space, seemed to make an atmosphere of midnight, as the flames of the burning galleons died away. There was a difficulty, too, in bringing all the Netherland ships into action—several of the smaller ones having been purposely stationed by Heemskerk on the edge of the bay to prevent the possible escape of any of the Spaniards. While some of these distant ships were crowding sail, in order to come to closer quarters, now that the day seemed going against the Spaniards, a tremendous explosion suddenly shook the air. One of the largest galleons, engaged in combat with a couple of Dutch vessels, had received a hot shot full in her powder magazine, and blew up with all on board. The blazing fragments drifted about among the other ships, and two more were soon on fire, their guns going off and their magazines exploding. The rock of Gibraltar seemed to reel. To the murky darkness succeeded the intolerable glare of a new and vast conflagration. The scene in that narrow roadstead was now almost infernal. It seemed, said an eye-witness, as if heaven and earth were passing away. A hopeless panic seized the Spaniards. The battle was over. The St. Augustine still lay in the deadly embrace of her antagonists, but all the other galleons were sunk or burned. Several of the lesser war-ships had also been destroyed. It was nearly sunset. The St. Augustine at last ran up a white flag, but it was not observed in the fierceness of the last moments of combat; the men from the bolus and the Tiger making a simultaneous rush on board the vanquished foe.

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The fight was done, but the massacre was at its beginning. The trumpeter, of Captain Kleinsorg clambered like a monkey up the mast of the St. Augustine, hauled down the admiral's flag, the last which was still waving, and gained the hundred florins. The ship was full of dead and dying; but a brutal, infamous butchery now took place. Some Netherland prisoners were found in the hold, who related that two messengers had been successively despatched to take their lives, as they lay there in chains, and that each had been shot, as he made his way towards the execution of the orders.

This information did not chill the ardour of their victorious countrymen. No quarter was given. Such of the victims as succeeded in throwing themselves overboard, out of the St. Augustine, or any of the burning or sinking ships, were pursued by the Netherlanders, who rowed about among them in boats, shooting, stabbing, and drowning their victims by hundreds. It was a sickening spectacle. The bay, said those who were there, seemed sown with corpses. Probably two or three thousand were thus put to death, or had met their fate before. Had the chivalrous Heemskerk lived, it is possible that he might have stopped the massacre. But the thought of the grief which would fill the commonwealth when the news should arrive of his death—thus turning the joy of the great triumph into lamentations—increased the animosity of his comrades. Moreover, in ransacking the Spanish admiral's ship, all his papers had been found, among them many secret instructions from Government signed "the King;" ordering most inhuman persecutions, not only of the Netherlanders, but of all who should in any way assist them, at sea or ashore. Recent examples of the thorough manner in which the royal admirals could carry out these bloody instructions had been furnished by the hangings, burnings, and drownings of Fazardo. But the barbarous ferocity of the Dutch on this occasion might have taught a lesson even to the comrades of Alva.

The fleet of Avila was entirely destroyed. The hulk of the St. Augustine drifted ashore, having been abandoned by the victors, and was set on fire by a few Spaniards who had concealed themselves on board, lest she might fall again into the enemy's hands.

The battle had lasted from half-past three until sunset. The Dutch vessels remained all the next day on the scene of their triumph. The townspeople were discerned, packing up their goods, and speeding panic-struck into the interior. Had Heemskerk survived he would doubtless have taken Gibraltar—fortress and town—and perhaps Cadiz, such was the consternation along the whole coast.

But his gallant spirit no longer directed the fleet. Bent rather upon plunder than glory, the ships now dispersed in search of prizes towards the Azores, the Canaries, or along the Portuguese coast; having first made a brief visit to Tetuan, where they were rapturously received by the Bey.

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The Hollanders lost no ships, and but one hundred seamen were killed. Two vessels were despatched homeward directly, one with sixty wounded sailors, the other with the embalmed body of the fallen Heemskerk. The hero was honoured with a magnificent funeral in Amsterdam at the public expense—the first instance in the history of the republic—and his name was enrolled on the most precious page of her records.

[The chief authorities for this remarkable battle are Meteren, 547, 548. Grotius, xvi. 731-738. Wagenaar, ix. 251-258.]

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Internal condition of Spain—Character of the people—Influence of the Inquisition—Population and Revenue—Incomes of Church and Government—Degradation of Labour—Expulsion of the Moors and its consequences—Venality the special characteristic of Spanish polity—Maxims of the foreign polity of Spain—The Spanish army and navy—Insolvent state of the Government—The Duke of Lerma—His position in the State—Origin of his power—System of bribery and trafficking—Philip III. His character—Domestic life of the king and queen.

A glance at the interior condition of Spain, now that there had been more than nine years of a new reign, should no longer be deferred. Spain was still superstitiously regarded as the leading power of the world, although foiled in all its fantastic and gigantic schemes. It was still supposed, according to current dogma, to share with the Ottoman empire the dominion of the earth. A series of fortunate marriages having united many of the richest and fairest portions of Europe under a single sceptre, it was popularly believed in a period when men were not much given as yet to examine very deeply the principles of human governments or the causes of national greatness, that an aggregation of powers which had resulted from preposterous laws of succession really constituted a mighty empire, founded by genius and valour.

The Spanish people, endowed with an acute and exuberant genius, which had exhibited itself in many paths of literature, science, and art; with a singular aptitude for military adventure, organization, and achievement; with a great variety, in short, of splendid and ennobling qualities; had been, for a long succession of years, accursed with almost the very worst political institutions known to history. The depth of their misery and of their degradation was hardly yet known to themselves, and this was perhaps the most hideous proof of the tyranny of which they had been the victims. To the outward world, the hollow fabric, out of which the whole pith and strength had been slowly gnawed away, was imposing and majestic still. But the priest, the soldier, and the courtier had been busy too long, and had done their work too thoroughly, to leave much hope of arresting the universal decay.

Nor did there seem any probability that the attempt would be made.

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It is always difficult to reform wide-spread abuses, even when they are acknowledged to exist, but when gigantic vices are proudly pointed to as the noblest of institutions and as the very foundations of the state, there seems nothing for the patriot to long for but the deluge.

It was acknowledged that the Spanish population—having a very large admixture of those races which, because not Catholic at heart, were stigmatized as miscreants, heretics, pagans, and, generally, as accursed--was by nature singularly prone to religious innovation. Had it not been for the Holy Inquisition, it was the opinion of acute and thoughtful observers in the beginning of the seventeenth century, that the infamous heresies of Luther, Calvin, and the rest, would have long before taken possession of the land. To that most blessed establishment it was owing that Spain had not polluted itself in the filth and ordure of the Reformation, and had been spared the horrible fate which had befallen large portions of Germany, France, Britain, and other barbarous northern nations. It was conscientiously and thankfully believed in Spain, two centuries ago, that the state had been saved from political and moral ruin by that admirable machine which detected heretics with unerring accuracy, burned them when detected, and consigned their descendants to political incapacity and social infamy to the remotest generation.

As the awful consequences of religious freedom, men pointed with a shudder to the condition of nations already speeding on the road to ruin, from which the two peninsulas at least had been saved. Yet the British empire, with the American republic still an embryo in its bosom, France, North Germany, and other great powers, had hardly then begun their headlong career. Whether the road of religious liberty was leading exactly to political ruin, the coming centuries were to judge.

Enough has been said in former chapters for the characterization of Philip II. and his polity. But there had now been nearly ten years of another reign. The system, inaugurated by Charles and perfected by his son, had reached its last expression under Philip III.

The evil done by father and son lived and bore plentiful fruit in the epoch of the grandson. And this is inevitable in history. No generation is long-lived enough to reap the harvest, whether of good or evil, which it sows.

Philip II. had been indefatigable in evil, a thorough believer in his supernatural mission as despot, not entirely without capacity for affairs, personally absorbed by the routine of his bureau.

He was a king, as he understood the meaning of the kingly office. His policy was continued after his death; but there was no longer a king. That important regulator to the governmental machinery was wanting. How its place was supplied will soon appear.

Meantime the organic functions were performed very much in the old way. There was, at least, no lack of priests or courtiers.

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Spain at this epoch had probably less than twelve millions of inhabitants, although the statistics of those days cannot be relied upon with accuracy. The whole revenue of the state was nominally sixteen or seventeen millions of dollars, but the greater portion of that income was pledged for many coming years to the merchants of Genoa. All the little royal devices for increasing the budget by debasing the coin of the realm, by issuing millions of copper tokens, by lowering the promised rate of interest on Government loans, by formally repudiating both interest and principal, had been tried, both in this and the preceding reign, with the usual success. An inconvertible paper currency, stimulating industry and improving morals by converting beneficent commerce into baleful gambling—that fatal invention did not then exist. Meantime, the legitimate trader and innocent citizen were harassed, and the general public endangered, as much as the limited machinery of the epoch permitted.

The available, unpledged revenue of the kingdom hardly amounted to five millions of dollars a-year. The regular annual income of the church was at least six millions. The whole personal property of the nation was estimated in a very clumsy and unsatisfactory way, no doubt—at sixty millions of dollars. Thus the income of the priesthood was ten per cent. of the whole funded estate of the country, and at least a million a year more than the income of the Government. Could a more biting epigram be made upon the condition to which the nation had been reduced?

Labour was more degraded than ever. The industrious classes, if such could be said to exist, were esteemed every day more and more infamous. Merchants, shopkeepers, mechanics, were reptiles, as vilely, esteemed as Jews, Moors, Protestants, or Pagans. Acquiring wealth by any kind of production was dishonourable. A grandee who should permit himself to sell the wool from his boundless sheep-walks disgraced his caste, and was accounted as low as a merchant. To create was the business of slaves and miscreants: to destroy was the distinguishing attribute of Christians and nobles. To cheat, to pick, and to steal, on the most minute and the most gigantic scale—these were also among the dearest privileges of the exalted classes. No merchandize was polluting save the produce of honest industry. To sell places in church and state, the army, the navy, and the sacred tribunals of law, to take bribes from rich and poor, high and low; in sums infinitesimal or enormous, to pillage the exchequer in, every imaginable form, to dispose of titles of honour, orders of chivalry, posts in municipal council, at auction; to barter influence, audiences, official interviews against money cynically paid down in rascal counters—all this was esteemed consistent with patrician dignity.

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The ministers, ecclesiastics, and those about court, obtaining a monopoly of such trade, left the business of production and circulation to their inferiors, while, as has already been sufficiently indicated, religious fanaticism and a pride of race, which nearly amounted to idiocy, had generated a scorn for labour even among the lowest orders. As a natural consequence, commerce and the mechanical arts fell almost exclusively into the hands of foreigners—Italians, English, and French—who resorted in yearly increasing numbers to Spain for the purpose of enriching themselves by the industry which the natives despised.

The capital thus acquired was at regular intervals removed from the country to other lands, where wealth resulting from traffic or manufactures was not accounted infamous.

Moreover, as the soil of the country was held by a few great proprietors—an immense portion in the dead-hand of an insatiate and ever-grasping church, and much of the remainder in vast entailed estates—it was nearly impossible for the masses of the people to become owners of any portion of the land. To be an agricultural day-labourer at less than a beggar's wage could hardly be a tempting pursuit for a proud and indolent race. It was no wonder therefore that the business of the brigand, the smuggler, the professional mendicant became from year to year more attractive and more overdone; while an ever-thickening swarm of priests, friars, and nuns of every order, engendered out of a corrupt and decaying society, increasing the general indolence, immorality, and unproductive consumption, and frightfully diminishing the productive force of the country, fed like locusts upon what was left in the unhappy land. "To shirk labour, infinite numbers become priests and friars," said, a good Catholic, in the year 1608—[Gir. Soranzo].

Before the end of the reign of Philip III. the peninsula, which might have been the granary of the world, did not produce food enough for its own population. Corn became a regular article of import into Spain, and would have come in larger quantities than it did had the industry of the country furnished sufficient material to exchange for necessary food.

And as if it had been an object of ambition with the priests and courtiers who then ruled a noble country, to make at exactly this epoch the most startling manifestation of human fatuity that the world had ever seen, it was now resolved by government to expel by armed force nearly the whole stock of intelligent and experienced labour, agricultural and mechanical, from the country. It is unnecessary to dwell long upon an event which, if it were not so familiarly known to mankind, would seem almost incredible. But the expulsion of the Moors is, alas! no exaggerated and imaginary satire, but a monument of wickedness and insanity such as is not often seen in human history.

Already, in the very first years of the century, John Ribera, archbishop of Valencia, had recommended and urged the scheme.

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It was too gigantic a project to be carried into execution at once, but it was slowly matured by the aid of other ecclesiastics. At last there were indications, both human and divine, that the expulsion of these miscreants could no longer be deferred. It was rumoured and believed that a general conspiracy existed among the Moors to rise upon the Government, to institute a general massacre, and, with the assistance of their allies and relatives on the Barbary coast, to re-establish the empire of the infidels.

A convoy of eighty ass-loads of oil on the way to Madrid had halted at a wayside inn. A few flasks were stolen, and those who consumed it were made sick. Some of the thieves even died, or were said to have died, in consequence. Instantly the rumour flew from mouth to mouth, from town to town, that the royal family, the court, the whole capital, all Spain, were to be poisoned with that oil. If such were the scheme it was certainly a less ingenious one than the famous plot by which the Spanish Government was suspected but a few years before to have so nearly succeeded in blowing the king, peers, and commons of England into the air.

The proof of Moorish guilt was deemed all-sufficient, especially as it was supported by supernatural evidence of the most portentous and convincing kind. For several days together a dark cloud, tinged with blood-red, had been seen to hang over Valencia.

In the neighbourhood of Daroca, a din of drums and trumpets and the clang of arms had been heard in the sky, just as a procession went out of a monastery.

At Valencia the image of the Virgin had shed tears. In another place her statue had been discovered in a state of profuse perspiration.

What more conclusive indications could be required as to the guilt of the Moors? What other means devised for saving crown, church, and kingdom from destruction but to expel the whole mass of unbelievers from the soil which they had too long profaned?

Archbishop Ribera was fully sustained by the Archbishop of Toledo, and the whole ecclesiastical body received energetic support from Government.

Ribera had solemnly announced that the Moors were so greedy of money, so determined to keep it, and so occupied with pursuits most apt for acquiring it, that they had come to be the sponge of Spanish wealth. The best proof of this, continued the reverend sage, was that, inhabiting in general poor little villages and sterile tracts of country, paying to the lords of the manor one third of the crops, and being overladen with special taxes imposed only upon them, they nevertheless became rich, while the Christians, cultivating the most fertile land, were in abject poverty.

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It seems almost incredible that this should not be satire. Certainly the most delicate irony could not portray the vicious institutions under which the magnificent territory and noble people of Spain were thus doomed to ruin more subtly and forcibly than was done by the honest brutality of this churchman. The careful tillage, the beautiful system of irrigation by aqueduct and canal, the scientific processes by which these “accursed” had caused the wilderness to bloom with cotton, sugar, and every kind of fruit and grain; the untiring industry, exquisite ingenuity, and cultivated taste by which the merchants, manufacturers, and mechanics, guilty of a darker complexion than that of the peninsular Goths, had enriched their native land with splendid fabrics in cloth, paper, leather, silk, tapestry, and by so doing had acquired fortunes for themselves, despite iniquitous taxation, religious persecution, and social contumely—all these were crimes against a race of idlers, steeped to the lips in sloth which imagined itself to be pride.

The industrious, the intelligent, the wealthy, were denounced as criminals, and hunted to death or into exile as vermin, while the Lermas, the Ucedas, and the rest of the brood of cormorants, settled more thickly than ever around their prey.

Meantime, Government declared that the piece of four maravedis should be worth eight maravedis; the piece of two maravedis being fixed at four. Thus the specie of the kingdom was to be doubled, and by means of this enlightened legislation, Spain, after destroying agriculture, commerce, and manufacture, was to maintain great armies and navies, and establish universal monarchy.

This measure, which a wiser churchman than Ribera, Cardinal Richelieu, afterwards declared the most audacious and barbarous ever recorded by history, was carried out with great regularity of organization. It was ordained that the Moors should be collected at three indicated points, whence they were not to move on pain of death, until duly escorted by troops to the ports of embarkation. The children under the age of four years were retained, of course without their parents, from whom they were forever separated. With admirable forethought, too, the priests took measures, as they supposed, that the arts of refining sugar, irrigating the rice-fields, constructing canals and aqueducts, besides many other useful branches of agricultural and mechanical business, should not die out with the intellectual, accomplished, and industrious race, alone competent to practise them, which was now sent forth to die. A very small number, not more than six in each hundred, were accordingly reserved to instruct other inhabitants of Spain in those useful arts which they were now more than ever encouraged to despise.

Five hundred thousand full-grown human beings, as energetic, ingenious, accomplished, as any then existing in the world, were thus thrust forth into the deserts beyond sea, as if Spain had been overstocked with skilled labour; and as if its native production had already outgrown the world’s power of consumption.

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Had an equal number of mendicant monks, with the two archbishops who had contrived this deed at their head, been exported instead of the Moors, the future of Spain might have been a more fortunate one than it was likely to prove. The event was in itself perhaps of temporary advantage to the Dutch republic, as the poverty and general misery, aggravated by this disastrous policy, rendered the acknowledgment of the States' independence by Spain almost a matter of necessity.

It is superfluous to enter into any farther disquisition as to the various branches of the royal revenue. They remained essentially the same as during the preceding reign, and have been elaborately set forth in a previous chapter. The gradual drying up of resources in all the wide-spread and heterogeneous territories subject to the Spanish sceptre is the striking phenomenon of the present epoch. The distribution of such wealth as was still created followed the same laws which had long prevailed, while the decay and national paralysis, of which the prognostics could hardly be mistaken, were a natural result of the system.

The six archbishops had now grown to eleven, and still received gigantic revenues; the income of the Archbishop of Toledo, including the fund of one hundred thousand destined for repairing the cathedral, being estimated at three hundred thousand dollars a year, that of the Archbishop of Seville and the others varying from one hundred and fifty thousand dollars to fifty thousand. The sixty-three bishops perhaps averaged fifty thousand a year each, and there were eight more in Italy.

The commanderies of chivalry, two hundred at least in number, were likewise enormously profitable. Some of them were worth thirty thousand a year; the aggregate annual value being from one-and-a-half to two millions, and all in Lerma's gift, upon his own terms.

Chivalry, that noblest of ideals, without which, in some shape or another, the world would be a desert and a sty; which included within itself many of the noblest virtues which can adorn mankind—generosity, self-denial, chastity, frugality, patience, protection to the feeble, the downtrodden, and the oppressed; the love of daring adventure, devotion to a pure religion and a lofty purpose, most admirably pathetic, even when in the eyes of the vulgar most fantastic—had been the proudest and most poetical of Spanish characteristics, never to be entirely uprooted from the national heart.

Alas! what was there in the commanderies of Calatrava, Alcantara, Santiago, and all the rest of those knightly orders, as then existing, to respond to the noble sentiments on which all were supposed to be founded? Institutions for making money, for pillaging the poor of their hard-earned pittance, trafficked in by greedy ministers and needy courtiers with a shamelessness which had long ceased to blush at vices however gross, at venality however mean.

Venality was in truth the prominent characteristic of the Spanish polity at this epoch. Everything political or ecclesiastical, from highest to lowest, was matter of merchandize.

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It was the autocrat, governing king and kingdom, who disposed of episcopal mitres, cardinals' hats, commanders' crosses, the offices of regidores or municipal magistrates in all the cities, farmings of revenues, collectorships of taxes, at prices fixed by himself.

It was never known that the pope refused to confirm the ecclesiastical nominations which were made by the Spanish court.

The nuncius had the privilege of dispensing the small cures from thirty dollars a year downwards, of which the number was enormous. Many of these were capable, in careful hands, of becoming ten times as valuable as their nominal estimate, and the business in them became in consequence very extensive and lucrative. They were often disposed of for the benefit of servants and the hangers-on of noble families, to laymen, to women, children, to babes unborn.

When such was the most thriving industry in the land, was it wonderful that the poor of high and low degree were anxious in ever-increasing swarms to effect their entrance into convent, monastery, and church, and that trade, agriculture, and manufactures languished?

The foreign polity of the court remained as it had been established by Philip II.

Its maxims were very simple. To do unto your neighbour all possible harm, and to foster the greatness of Spain by sowing discord and maintaining civil war in all other nations, was the fundamental precept. To bribe and corrupt the servants of other potentates, to maintain a regular paid bode of adherents in foreign lands, ever ready to engage in schemes of assassination, conspiracy, sedition, and rebellion against the legitimate authority, to make mankind miserable, so far as it was in the power of human force or craft to produce wretchedness, were objects still faithfully pursued.

They had not yet led to the entire destruction of other realms and their submission to the single sceptre of Spain, nor had they developed the resources, material or moral, of a mighty empire so thoroughly as might have been done perhaps by a less insidious policy, but they had never been abandoned.

It was a steady object of policy to keep such potentates of Italy as were not already under the dominion of the Spanish crown in a state of internecine feud with each other and of virtual dependence on the powerful kingdom. The same policy pursued in France, of fomenting civil war by subsidy, force, and chicane, during a long succession of years in order to reduce that magnificent realm under the sceptre of Philip, has been described in detail. The chronic rebellion of Ireland against the English crown had been assisted and inflamed in every possible mode, the system being considered as entirely justified by the aid and comfort afforded by the queen to the Dutch rebels.

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It was a natural result of the system according to which kingdoms and provinces with the populations dwelling therein were transferable like real estate by means of marriage-settlements, entails, and testaments, that the proprietorship of most of the great realms in Christendom was matter of fierce legal dispute. Lawsuits, which in chancery could last for centuries before a settlement of the various claims was made, might have infinitely enriched the gentlemen of the long robe and reduced all the parties to beggary, had there been any tribunal but the battle-field to decide among the august litigants. Thus the King of Great Britain claimed the legal proprietorship and sovereignty of Brittany, Normandy, Anjou, Gascony, Calais, and Boulogne in France, besides the whole kingdom by right of conquest. The French king claimed to be rightful heir of Castile, Biscay, Guipuscoa, Arragon, Navarre, nearly all the Spanish peninsula in short, including the whole of Portugal and the Balearic islands to boot. The King of Spain claimed, as we have seen often enough, not only Brittany but all France as his lawful inheritance. Such was the virtue of the prevalent doctrine of proprietorship. Every potentate was defrauded of his rights, and every potentate was a criminal usurper. As for the people, it would have excited a smile of superior wisdom on regal, legal, or sacerdotal lips, had it been suggested that by any possibility the governed could have a voice or a thought in regard to the rulers whom God in His grace had raised up to be their proprietors and masters.

The army of Spain was sunk far below the standard at which it had been kept when it seemed fit to conquer and govern the world. Neither by Spain nor Italy could those audacious, disciplined, and obedient legions be furnished, at which the enemies of the mighty despot trembled from one extremity of earth to the other. Peculation, bankruptcy, and mutiny had done their work at last. We have recently had occasion to observe the conduct of the veterans in Flanders at critical epochs. At this moment, seventy thousand soldiers were on the muster and pay roll of the army serving in those provinces, while not thirty thousand men existed in the flesh.

The navy was sunk to fifteen or twenty old galleys, battered, dismantled, unseaworthy, and a few armed ships for convoying the East and West Indiamen to and from their destinations.

The general poverty was so great that it was often absolutely impossible to purchase food for the royal household. "If you ask me," said a cool observer, "how this great show of empire is maintained, when the funds are so small, I answer that it is done by not paying at all." The Government was shamelessly, hopelessly bankrupt. The noble band of courtiers were growing enormously rich. The state was a carcass which unclean vultures were picking to the bones.

The foremost man in the land—the autocrat, the absolute master in State and Church—was the Duke of Lerma.

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Very rarely in human history has an individual attained to such unlimited power under a monarchy, without actually placing the crown upon his own head. Mayors of the palace, in the days of the do-nothing kings, wielded nothing like the imperial control which was firmly held by this great favourite. Yet he was a man of very moderate capacity and limited acquirements, neither soldier, lawyer, nor priest.

The duke was past sixty years of age, a tall, stately, handsome man, of noble presence and urbane manner. Born of the patrician house of Sandoval, he possessed, on the accession of Philip, an inherited income of ten or twelve thousand dollars. He had now, including what he had bestowed on his son, a funded revenue of seven hundred thousand a year. He had besides, in cash, jewels, and furniture, an estimated capital of six millions. All this he had accumulated in ten years of service, as prime minister, chief equerry, and first valet of the chamber to the king.

The tenure of his authority was the ascendancy of a firm character over a very weak one. At this moment he was doubtless the most absolute ruler in Christendom, and Philip III. the most submissive and uncomplaining of his subjects.

The origin of his power was well known. During the reign of Philip II., the prince, treated with great severity by his father, was looked upon with contempt by every one about court. He was allowed to take no part in affairs, and, having heard of the awful tragedy of his eldest half-brother, enacted ten years before his own birth, he had no inclination to confront the wrath of that terrible parent and sovereign before whom all Spain trembled. Nothing could have been more humble, more effaced, more obscure, than his existence as prince. The Marquis of Denia, his chamberlain, alone was kind to him, furnished him with small sums of money, and accompanied him on the shooting excursions in which his father occasionally permitted him to indulge. But even these little attentions were looked upon with jealousy by the king; so that the marquis was sent into honourable exile from court as governor of Valencia. It was hoped that absence would wean the prince of his affection for the kind chamberlain. The calculation was erroneous. No sooner were the eyes of Philip II. closed in death than the new king made haste to send for Denia, who was at once created Duke of Lerma, declared of the privy council, and appointed master of the horse and first gentleman of the bed-chamber. From that moment the favourite became supreme. He was entirely without education, possessed little experience in affairs of state, and had led the life of a commonplace idler and voluptuary until past the age of fifty. Nevertheless he had a shrewd mother-wit, tact in dealing with men, aptitude to take advantage of events. He had directness of purpose, firmness of will, and always knew his own mind. From the beginning of his political career unto its end,

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he conscientiously and without swerving pursued a single aim. This was to rob the exchequer by every possible mode and at every instant of his life. Never was a more masterly financier in this respect. With a single eye to his own interests, he preserved a magnificent unity in all his actions. The result had been to make him in ten years the richest subject in the world, as well as the most absolute ruler.

He enriched his family, as a matter of course. His son was already made Duke of Uceda, possessed enormous wealth, and was supposed by those who had vision in the affairs of court to be the only individual ever likely to endanger the power of the father. Others thought that the young duke's natural dulness would make it impossible for him to supplant the omnipotent favourite. The end was not yet, and time was to show which class of speculators was in the right. Meantime the whole family was united and happy. The sons and daughters had intermarried with the Infantados, and other most powerful and wealthy families of grandees. The uncle, Sandoval, had been created by Lerma a cardinal and archbishop of Toledo; the king's own schoolmaster being removed from that dignity, and disgraced and banished from court for having spoken disrespectfully of the favourite. The duke had reserved for himself twenty thousand a year from the revenues of the archbishopric, as a moderate price for thus conducting himself as became a dutiful nephew. He had ejected Rodrigo de Vasquez from his post as president of the council. As a more conclusive proof of his unlimited sway than any other of his acts had been, he had actually unseated and banished the inquisitor-general, Don Pietro Porto Carrero, and supplanted him in that dread office, before which even anointed sovereigns trembled, by one of his own creatures.

In the discharge of his various functions, the duke and all his family were domesticated in the royal palace, so that he was at no charges for housekeeping. His apartments there were more sumptuous than those of the king and queen. He had removed from court the Dutchess of Candia, sister of the great Constable of Castile, who had been for a time in attendance on the queen, and whose possible influence he chose to destroy in the bud. Her place as mistress of the robes was supplied by his sister, the Countess of Lemos; while his wife, the terrible Duchess of Lerma, was constantly with the queen, who trembled at her frown. Thus the royal pair were completely beleaguered, surrounded, and isolated from all except the Lermas. When the duke conferred with the king, the doors were always double locked.

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In his capacity as first valet it was the duke's duty to bring the king's shirt in the morning, to see to his wardrobe and his bed, and to supply him with ideas for the day. The king depended upon him entirely and abjectly, was miserable when separated from him four-and-twenty hours, thought with the duke's thoughts and saw with the duke's eyes. He was permitted to know nothing of state affairs, save such portions as were communicated to him by Lerma. The people thought their monarch bewitched, so much did he tremble before the favourite, and so unscrupulously did the duke appropriate for his own benefit and that of his creatures everything that he could lay his hands upon. It would have needed little to bring about a revolution, such was the universal hatred felt for the minister, and the contempt openly expressed for the king.

The duke never went to the council. All papers and documents relating to business were sent to his apartments. Such matters as he chose to pass upon, such decrees as he thought proper to issue, were then taken by him to the king, who signed them with perfect docility. As time went on, this amount of business grew too onerous for the royal hand, or this amount of participation by the king in affairs of state came to be esteemed superfluous and inconvenient by the duke, and his own signature was accordingly declared to be equivalent to that of the sovereign's sign-manual. It is doubtful whether such a degradation of the royal prerogative had ever been heard of before in a Christian monarch.

It may be imagined that this system of government was not of a nature to expedite business, however swiftly it might fill the duke's coffers. High officers of state, foreign ambassadors, all men in short charged with important affairs, were obliged to dance attendance for weeks and months on the one man whose hands grasped all the business of the kingdom, while many departed in despair without being able to secure a single audience. It was entirely a matter of trade. It was necessary to bribe in succession all the creatures of the duke before getting near enough to headquarters to bribe the duke himself. Never were such itching palms. To do business at court required the purse of Fortunatus. There was no deception in the matter. Everything was frank and above board in that age of chivalry. Ambassadors wrote to their sovereigns that there was no hope of making treaties or of accomplishing any negotiation except by purchasing the favour of the autocrat; and Lerma's price was always high. At one period the republic of Venice wished to put a stop to the depredations by Spanish pirates upon Venetian commerce, but the subject could not even be approached by the envoy until he had expended far more than could be afforded out of his meagre salary in buying an interview.

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When it is remembered that with this foremost power in the world affairs of greater or less importance were perpetually to be transacted by the representatives of other nations as well as by native subjects of every degree; that all these affairs were to pass through the hands of Lerma, and that those hands had ever to be filled with coin, the stupendous opulence of the one man can be easily understood. Whether the foremost power of the world, thus governed, were likely to continue the foremost power, could hardly seem doubtful to those accustomed to use their reason in judging of the things of this world.

Meantime the duke continued to transact business; to sell his interviews and his interest; to traffic in cardinals' hats, bishops' mitres, judges' ermine, civic and magisterial votes in all offices, high or humble, of church, army, or state.

He possessed the art of remembering, or appearing to remember, the matters of business which had been communicated to him. When a negotiator, of whatever degree, had the good fortune to reach the presence, he found the duke to all appearance mindful of the particular affair which led to the interview, and fully absorbed by its importance. There were men who, trusting to the affability shown by the great favourite, and to the handsome price paid down in cash for that urbanity, had been known to go away from their interview believing that their business was likely to be accomplished, until the lapse of time revealed to them the wildness of their dream.

The duke perhaps never manifested his omnipotence on a more striking scale than when by his own fiat he removed the court and the seat of government to Valladolid, and kept it there six years long. This was declared by disinterested observers to be not only contrary to common sense, but even beyond the bounds of possibility. At Madrid the king had splendid palaces, and in its neighbourhood beautiful country residences, a pure atmosphere, and the facility of changing the air at will. At Valladolid there were no conveniences of any kind, no sufficient palace, no summer villa, no park, nothing but an unwholesome climate. But most of the duke's estates were in that vicinity, and it was desirable for him to overlook them in person. Moreover, he wished to get rid of the possible influence over the king of the Empress Dowager Maria, widow of Maximilian II. and aunt and grandmother of Philip III. The minister could hardly drive this exalted personage from court, so easily as he had banished the ex-Archbishop of Toledo, the Inquisitor General, the Duchess of Candia, besides a multitude of lesser note. So he did the next best thing, and banished the court from the empress, who was not likely to put up with the inconveniences of Valladolid for the sake of outrivalling the duke. This Babylonian captivity lasted until Madrid was nearly ruined, until the desolation of the capital, the moans of the trades-people, the curses of the poor, and the grumblings of the courtiers, finally produced an effect even upon the arbitrary Lerma. He then accordingly re-emigrated, with king and Government, to Madrid, and caused it to be published that he had at last overcome the sovereign's repugnance to the old capital, and had persuaded him to abandon Valladolid.

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There was but one man who might perhaps from his position have competed with the influence of Lerma. This was the king's father-confessor, whom Philip wished—although of course his wish was not gratified—to make a member of the council of state. The monarch, while submitting in everything secular to the duke's decrees, had a feeble determination to consult and to be guided by his confessor in all matters of conscience. As it was easy to suggest that high affairs of state, the duties of government, the interests of a great people, were matters not entirely foreign to the conscience of anointed kings, an opening to power might have seemed easy to an astute and ambitious churchman. But the Dominican who kept Philip's conscience, Gasparo de Cordova by name, was, fortunately for the favourite, of a very tender paste, easily moulded to the duke's purpose. Dull and ignorant enough, he was not so stupid as to doubt that, should he whisper any suggestions or criticisms in regard to the minister's proceedings, the king would betray him and he would lose his office. The cautious friar accordingly held his peace and his place, and there was none to dispute the sway of the autocrat.

What need to dilate further upon such a minister and upon such a system of government? To bribe and to be bribed, to maintain stipendiaries in every foreign Government, to place the greatness of the empire upon the weakness, distraction, and misery of other nations, to stimulate civil war, revolts of nobles and citizens against authority; separation of provinces, religious discontents in every land of Christendom—such were the simple rules ever faithfully enforced.

The other members of what was called the council were insignificant.

Philip III., on arriving at the throne, had been heard to observe that the day of simple esquires and persons of low condition was past, and that the turn of great nobles had come. It had been his father's policy to hold the grandees in subjection, and to govern by means of ministers who were little more than clerks, generally of humble origin; keeping the reins in his own hands. Such great personages as he did employ, like Alva, Don John of Austria, and Farnese, were sure at last to excite his jealousy and to incur his hatred. Forty-three years of this kind of work had brought Spain to the condition in which the third Philip found it. The new king thought to have found a remedy in discarding the clerks, and calling in the aid of dukes. Philip II. was at least a king. The very first act of Philip III. at his father's death was to abdicate.

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It was, however, found necessary to retain some members of the former Government. Fuentes, the best soldier and accounted the most dangerous man in the empire, was indeed kept in retirement as governor of Milan, while Cristoval di Mora, who had enjoyed much of the late king's confidence, was removed to Portugal as viceroy. But Don John of Idiaquez, who had really been the most efficient of the old administration, still remained in the council. Without the subordinate aid of his experience in the routine of business, it would have been difficult for the favourite to manage the great machine with his single hand. But there was no disposition on the part of the ancient minister to oppose the new order of things. A cautious, caustic, dry old functionary, talking more with his shoulders than with his tongue, determined never to commit himself, or to risk shipwreck by venturing again into deeper waters than those of the harbour in which he now hoped for repose, Idiaquez knew that his day of action was past. Content to be confidential clerk to the despot duke, as he had been faithful secretary to the despot king, he was the despair of courtiers and envoys who came to pump, after having endeavoured to fill an inexhaustible cistern. Thus he proved, on the whole, a useful and comfortable man, not to the country, but to its autocrat.

Of the Count of Chinchon, who at one time was supposed to have court influence because a dabbler in architecture, much consulted during the building of the Escorial by Philip II. until the auditing of his accounts brought him into temporary disgrace, and the Marquises of Velada, Villalonga, and other ministers, it is not necessary to speak. There was one man in the council, however, who was of great importance, wielding a mighty authority in subordination to the duke. This was Don Pietro de Franqueza. An emancipated slave, as his name indicated, and subsequently the body-servant of Lerma, he had been created by that minister secretary of the privy council. He possessed some of the virtues of the slave, such as docility and attachment to the hand that had fed and scourged him, and many vices of both slave and freedman. He did much of the work which it would have been difficult for the duke to accomplish in person, received his fees, sold and dispensed his interviews, distributed his bribes. In so doing, as might be supposed, he did not neglect his own interest. It was a matter of notoriety, no man knowing it better than the king, that no business, foreign or domestic, could be conducted or even begun at court without large preliminary fees to the secretary of the council, his wife, and his children. He had, in consequence, already accumulated an enormous fortune. His annual income, when it was stated, excited amazement. He was insolent and overbearing to all comers until his dues had been paid, when he became at once obliging, supple, and comparatively efficient. Through him alone lay the path to the duke's sanctuary.

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The nominal sovereign, Philip III., was thirty years of age. A very little man, with pink cheeks, flaxen hair, and yellow beard, with a melancholy expression of eye, and protruding under lip and jaw, he was now comparatively alert and vigorous in constitution, although for the first seven years of his life it had been doubtful whether he would live from week to week. He had been afflicted during that period with a chronic itch or leprosy, which had undermined his strength, but which had almost entirely disappeared as he advanced in life.

He was below mediocrity in mind, and had received scarcely any education. He had been taught to utter a few phrases, more or less intelligible, in French, Italian, and Flemish, but was quite incapable of sustaining a conversation in either of those languages. When a child, he had learned and subsequently forgotten the rudiments of the Latin grammar.

These acquirements, together with the catechism and the offices of the Church, made up his whole stock of erudition. That he was devout as a monk of the middle ages, conforming daily and hourly to religious ceremonies, need scarcely be stated. It was not probable that the son of Philip II. would be a delinquent to church observances. He was not deficient in courage, rode well, was fond of hunting, kept close to the staghounds, and confronted, spear in hand, the wild-boar with coolness and success. He was fond of tennis, but his especial passion and chief accomplishment was dancing. He liked to be praised for his proficiency in this art, and was never happier than when gravely leading out the queen or his daughter, then four or five years of age—for he never danced with any one else—to perform a stately bolero.

He never drank wine, but, on the other hand, was an enormous eater; so that, like his father in youth, he was perpetually suffering from stomach-ache as the effect of his gluttony. He was devotedly attached to his queen, and had never known, nor hardly looked at, any other woman. He had no vice but gambling, in which he indulged to a great extent, very often sitting up all night at cards. This passion of the king's was much encouraged by Lerma, for obvious reasons. Philip had been known to lose thirty thousand dollars at a sitting, and always to some one of the family or dependents of the duke, who of course divided with them the spoils. At one time the Count of Pelbes, nephew of Lerma, had won two hundred thousand dollars in a very few nights from his sovereign.

For the rest, Philip had few peculiarities or foibles. He was not revengeful, nor arrogant, nor malignant. He was kind and affectionate to his wife and children, and did his best to be obedient to the Duke of Lerma. Occasionally he liked to grant audiences, but there were few to request them. It was ridiculous and pathetic at the same time to see the poor king, as was very frequently the case, standing at a solemn green table till his little legs were tired, waiting

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to transact business with applicants who never came; while ushers, chamberlains, and valets were rushing up and down the corridors, bawling for all persons so disposed to come and have an audience of their monarch. Meantime, the doors of the great duke's apartments in the same palace would be beleaguered by an army of courtiers, envoys, and contractors, who had paid solid gold for admission, and who were often sent away grumbling and despairing without entering the sacred precincts.

As time wore on, the king, too much rebuked for attempting to meddle in state affairs, became solitary and almost morose, moping about in the woods by himself, losing satisfaction in his little dancing and ball-playing diversions, but never forgetting his affection for the queen nor the hours for his four daily substantial repasts of meats and pastry. It would be unnecessary and almost cruel to dwell so long upon a picture of what was after all not much better than human imbecility, were it not that humanity is, a more sacred thing than royalty. A satire upon such an embodiment of kingship is impossible, the simple and truthful characteristics being more effective than fiction or exaggeration. It would be unjust to exhume a private character after the lapse of two centuries merely to excite derision, but if history be not powerless to instruct, it certainly cannot be unprofitable to ponder the merits of a system which, after bestowing upon the world forty-three years of Philip the tyrant, had now followed them up with a decade of Philip the simpleton.

In one respect the reigning sovereign was in advance of his age. In his devotion to the Madonna he claimed the same miraculous origin for her mother as for herself. When the prayer "O Sancta Maria sine labe originali concepta" was chanted, he would exclaim with emotion that the words embodied his devoutest aspirations. He had frequent interviews with doctors of divinity on the subject, and instructed many bishops to urge upon the pope the necessity of proclaiming the virginity of the Virgin's mother. Could he secure this darling object of his ambition, he professed himself ready to make a pilgrimage on foot to Rome. The pilgrimage was never made, for it may well be imagined that Lerma would forbid any such adventurous scheme. Meantime, the duke continued to govern the empire and to fill his coffers, and the king to shoot rabbits.

The queen was a few years younger than her husband, and far from beautiful. Indeed, the lower portion of her face was almost deformed. She was graceful, however, in her movements, and pleasing and gentle in manner. She adored the king, looking up to him with reverence as the greatest and wisest of beings. To please him she had upon her marriage given up drinking wine, which, for a German, was considered a great sacrifice. She recompensed herself, as the king did, by eating to an extent which, according to contemporary accounts, excited amazement. Thus there was perfect sympathy between the two in the important article of diet. She had also learned to play at cards, in order to take a hand with him at any moment, feebly hoping that an

occasional game for love might rescue the king from that frantic passion by which his health was shattered and so many courtiers were enriched.

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Not being deficient in perception, the queen was quite aware of the greediness of all who surrounded the palace. She had spirit enough too to feel the galling tyranny to which the king was subjected. That the people hated the omnipotent favourite, and believed the king to be under the influence of sorcery, she was well aware. She had even a dim notion that the administration of the empire was not the wisest nor the noblest that could be devised for the first power in Christendom. But considerations of high politics scarcely troubled her mind. Of a People she had perhaps never heard, but she felt that the king was oppressed. She knew that he was helpless, and that she was herself his only friend. But of what avail were her timid little flutterings of indignation and resistance? So pure and fragile a creature could accomplish little good for king or people. Perpetually guarded and surrounded by the Countess of Lemos and the Duchess of Lerma, she lived in mortal awe of both. As to the duke himself, she trembled at his very name. On her first attempts to speak with Philip on political matters—to hint at the unscrupulous character of his government, to arouse him to the necessity of striking for a little more liberty and for at least a trifling influence in the state—the poor little king instantly betrayed her to the favourite and she was severely punished. The duke took the monarch off at once on a long journey, leaving her alone for weeks long with the terrible duchess and countess. Never before had she been separated for a day from her husband, it having been the king's uniform custom to take her with him in all his expeditions. Her ambition to interfere was thus effectually cured. The duke forbade her thenceforth ever to speak of politics to her husband in public or in private—not even in bed—and the king was closely questioned whether these orders had been obeyed. She submitted without a struggle. She saw how completely her happiness was at Lerma's mercy. She had no one to consult with, having none but Spanish people about her, except her German father-confessor, whom, as a great favour, and after a severe struggle, she had been allowed to retain, as otherwise her ignorance of the national language would have made it impossible for her to confess her little sins. Moreover her brothers, the archdukes at Gratz, were in receipt of considerable annual stipends from the Spanish exchequer, and the duke threatened to stop those pensions at once should the queen prove refractory. It is painful to dwell any longer on the abject servitude in which the king and queen were kept. The two were at least happy in each other's society, and were blessed with mutual affection, with pretty and engaging children, and with a similarity of tastes. It is impossible to imagine anything more stately, more devout, more regular, more innocent, more utterly dismal and insipid, than the lives of this wedded pair.

This interior view of the court and council of Spain will suffice to explain why, despite the languor and hesitations with which the transactions were managed, the inevitable tendency was towards a peace. The inevitable slowness, secrecy, and tergiversations were due to the dignity of the Spanish court, and in harmony with its most sacred traditions.

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But what profit could the Duke of Lerma expect by the continuance of the Dutch war, and who in Spain was to be consulted except the Duke of Lerma?

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A man incapable of fatigue, of perplexity, or of fear
Converting beneficent commerce into baleful gambling
Gigantic vices are proudly pointed to as the noblest
No generation is long-lived enough to reap the harvest
Proclaiming the virginity of the Virgin's mother
Steeped to the lips in sloth which imagined itself to be pride
To shirk labour, infinite numbers become priests and friars

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