

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

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1607b 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. 80

History of the United Netherlands, 1607

CHAPTER XLIX.

Peace deliberations in Spain—Unpopularity of the project— Disaffection of the courtiers—Complaints against Spinola— Conference of the Catholic party—Position of Henry IV. towards the republic—State of France Further peace negotiations—Desire of King James of England for the restoration of the States to Spain—Arrival of the French commissioners President Jeannin before the States- General—Dangers of a truce with Spain—Dutch legation to England— Arrival of Lewis Verreyken at the Hague with Philip's ratification— Rejection of the Spanish treaty—Withdrawal of the Dutch fleet from the Peninsula—The peace project denounced by the party of Prince Maurice— Opposition of Maurice to the plans of Barneveld—Amended ratification presented to the States-General—Discussion of the conditions—Determination to conclude a peace—

Indian trade— Exploits of Admiral Matelieff in the Malay peninsula—He lays siege to Malacca—Victory over the Spanish fleet—Endeavour to open a trade with China—Return of Matelieff to Holland.

The Marquis Spinola had informed the Spanish Government that if 300,000 dollars a month could be furnished, the war might be continued, but that otherwise it would be better to treat upon the basis of 'uti possidetis,' and according to the terms proposed by the States-General. He had further intimated his opinion that, instead of waiting for the king's consent, it more comported with the king's dignity for the archdukes to enter into negotiations, to make a preliminary and brief armistice with the enemy, and then to solicit the royal approval of what had been done.

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In reply, the king—that is to say the man who thought, wrote, and signed in behalf of the king—had plaintively observed that among evils the vulgar rule was to submit to the least. Although, therefore, to grant to the Netherland rebels not only peace and liberty, but to concede to them whatever they had obtained by violence and the most abominable outrages, was the worst possible example to all princes; yet as the enormous sum necessary for carrying on the war was not to be had, even by attempting to scrape it together from every corner of the earth, he agreed with the opinion of the archdukes that it was better to put an end to this eternal and exhausting war by peace or truce, even under severe conditions. That the business had thus far proceeded without consulting him, was publicly known, and he expressed approval of the present movements towards a peace or a long truce, assuring Spinola that such a result would be as grateful to him as if the war had been brought to a successful issue.

When the Marquis sent formal notice of the armistice to Spain there were many complaints at court. Men said that the measure was beneath the king's dignity, and contrary to his interests. It was a cessation of arms under iniquitous conditions, accorded to a people formerly subject and now rebellious. Such a truce was more fatal than any conflict, than any amount of slaughter. During this long and dreadful war, the king had suffered no disaster so terrible as this, and the courtiers now declared openly that the archduke was the cause of the royal and national humiliation. Having no children, nor hope of any, he desired only to live in tranquillity and selfish indulgence, like the indolent priest that he was, not caring what detriment or dishonour might accrue to the crown after his life was over.

Thus murmured the parasites and the plunderers within the dominions of the do-nothing Philip, denouncing the first serious effort to put an end to a war which the laws of nature had proved to be hopeless on the part of Spain.

Spinola too, who had spent millions of his own money, who had plunged himself into debt and discredit, while attempting to sustain the financial reputation of the king, who had by his brilliant services in the field revived the ancient glory of the Spanish arms, and who now saw himself exposed with empty coffers to a vast mutiny, which was likely to make his future movements as paralytic as those of his immediate predecessors—Spinola, already hated because he was an Italian, because he was of a mercantile family, and because he had been successful, was now as much the object of contumely with the courtiers as with the archduke himself.

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The splendid victory of Heemskerk had struck the government with dismay and diffused a panic along the coast. The mercantile fleets, destined for either India, dared not venture forth so long as the terrible Dutch cruisers, which had just annihilated a splendid Spanish fleet, commanded by a veteran of Lepanto, and under the very guns of Gibraltar, were supposed to be hovering off the Peninsula. Very naturally, therefore, there was discontent in Spain that the cessation of hostilities had not originally been arranged for sea as well as land, and men said openly at court that Spinola ought to have his head cut off for agreeing to such an armistice. Quite as reasonably, however, it was now felt to be necessary to effect as soon as possible the recal of this very inconvenient Dutch fleet from the coast of Spain.

The complaints were so incessant against Spinola that it was determined to send Don Diego d'Ybarra to Brussels, charged with a general superintendence of the royal interests in the present confused condition of affairs. He was especially instructed to convey to Spinola the most vehement reproaches in regard to the terms of the armistice, and to insist upon the cessation of naval hostilities, and the withdrawal of the cruisers.

Spinola, on his part, was exceedingly irritated that the arrangements which he had so carefully made with the archduke at Brussels should be so contumaciously assailed, and even disavowed, at Madrid. He was especially irritated that Ybarra should now be sent as his censor and overseer, and that Fuentes should have received orders to levy seven thousand troops in the Milanese for Flanders, the arrival of which reinforcements would excite suspicion, and probably break off negotiations.

He accordingly sent his private secretary Biraga, posthaste to Spain with two letters. In number one he implored his Majesty that Ybarra might not be sent to Brussels. If this request were granted, number two was to be burned. Otherwise, number two was to be delivered, and it contained a request to be relieved from all further employment in the king's service. The marquis was already feeling the same effects of success as had been experienced by Alexander Farnese, Don John of Austria, and other strenuous maintainers of the royal authority in Flanders. He was railed against, suspected, spied upon, put under guardianship, according to the good old traditions of the Spanish court. Public disgrace or secret poison might well be expected by him, as the natural guerdons of his eminent deeds.

Biraga also took with him the draught of the form in which the king's consent to the armistice and pending negotiations was desired, and he was particularly directed to urge that not one letter or comma should be altered, in order that no pretext might be afforded to the suspicious Netherlanders for a rupture.

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In private letters to his own superintendent Strata, to Don John of Idiaquez, to the Duke of Lerma, and to Stephen Ybarra, Spinola enlarged upon the indignity about to be offered him, remonstrated vehemently against the wrong and stupidity of the proposed policy, and expressed his reliance upon the efforts of these friends of his to prevent its consummation. He intimated to Idiaquez that a new deliberation would be necessary to effect the withdrawal of the Dutch fleet—a condition not inserted in the original armistice—but that within the three months allowed for the royal ratification there would be time enough to procure the consent of the States to that measure. If the king really desired to continue the war, he had but to alter a single comma in the draught, and, out of that comma, the stadholder's party would be certain to manufacture for him as long a war as he could possibly wish.

In a subsequent letter to the king, Spinola observed that he was well aware of the indignation created in Spain by the cessation of land hostilities without the recal of the fleet, but that nevertheless John Neyen had confidentially represented to the archdukes the royal assent as almost certain. As to the mission of Ybarra, the marquis reminded his master that the responsibility and general superintendence of the negotiations had been almost forced upon him. Certainly he had not solicited them. If another agent were now interposed, it was an advertisement to the world that the business had been badly managed. If the king wished a rupture, he had but to lift his finger or his pen; but to appoint another commissioner was an unfit reward for his faithful service. He was in the king's hands. If his reputation were now to be destroyed, it was all over with him and his affairs. The man, whom mortals had once believed incapable, would be esteemed incapable until the end of his days.

It was too late to prevent the mission of Ybarra, who, immediately after his arrival in Brussels, began to urge in the king's name that the words in which the provinces had been declared free by the archdukes might be expunged. What could be more childish than such diplomacy? What greater proof could be given of the incapacity of the Spanish court to learn the lesson which forty years had been teaching? Spinola again wrote a most earnest remonstrance to the king, assuring him that this was simply to break off the negotiation. It was ridiculous to suppose, he said, that concessions already made by the archdukes, ratification of which on the part of the king had been guaranteed, could now be annulled. Those acquainted with Netherland obstinacy knew better. The very possibility of the king's refusal excited the scorn of the States-General.

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Ybarra went about, too, prating to the archdukes and to others of supplies to be sent from Spain sufficient to carry on the war for many years, and of fresh troops to be forwarded immediately by Fuentes. As four millions of crowns a year were known to be required for any tolerable campaigning, such empty vaunts as these were preposterous. The king knew full well, said Spinola, and had admitted the fact in his letters, that this enormous sum could not be furnished. Moreover, the war cost the Netherlanders far less in proportion. They had river transportation, by which they effected as much in two days as the Catholic army could do in a fortnight, so that every siege was managed with far greater rapidity and less cost by the rebels than by their opponents. As to sending troops from Milan, he had already stated that their arrival would have a fatal effect. The minds of the people were full of suspicion. Every passing rumour excited a prodigious sensation, and the war party was already gaining the upper hand. Spinola warned the king, in the most solemn manner, that if the golden opportunity were now neglected the war would be eternal. This, he said, was more certain than certain. For himself, he had strained every nerve, and would continue to do his best in the interest of peace. If calamity must come, he at least would be held blameless.

Such vehement remonstrances from so eminent a source produced the needful effect. Royal letters were immediately sent, placing full powers of treating in the hands of the marquis, and sending him a ratification of the archduke's agreement. Government moreover expressed boundless confidence in Spinola, and deprecated the idea that Ybarra's mission was in derogation of his authority. He had been sent, it was stated, only to procure that indispensable preliminary to negotiations, the withdrawal of the Dutch fleet, but as this had now been granted, Ybarra was already recalled.

Spinola now determined to send the swift and sure-footed friar, who had made himself so useful in opening the path to discussion, on a secret mission to Spain. Ybarra objected; especially because it would be necessary for him to go through France, where he would be closely questioned by the king. It would be equally dangerous, he said, for the Franciscan in that case to tell the truth or to conceal it. But Spinola replied that a poor monk like him could steal through France undiscovered. Moreover, he should be disguised as a footman, travelling in the service of Aurelio Spinola, a relative of the marquis, then proceeding to Madrid. Even should Henry hear of his presence and send for him, was it to be supposed that so practised a hand would not easily parry the strokes of the French king—accomplished fencer as he undoubtedly was? After stealing into and out of Holland as he had so recently done, there was nothing that might not be expected of him. So the wily friar put on the Spinola livery, and, without impediment, accompanied Don Aurelio to Madrid.

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Meantime, the French commissioners—Pierre Jeannin, Buzanval, regular resident at the Hague, and De Russy, who was destined to succeed that diplomatist—had arrived in Holland.

The great drama of negotiation, which was now to follow the forty years' tragedy, involved the interests and absorbed the attention of the great Christian powers. Although serious enough in its substance and its probable consequences, its aspect was that of a solemn comedy. There was a secret disposition on the part of each leading personage—with a few exceptions—to make dupes of all the rest. Perhaps this was a necessary result of statesmanship, as it had usually been taught at that epoch.

Paul V., who had succeeded Clement VIII. in 1605, with the brief interlude of the twenty-six days of Leo XI.'s pontificate, was zealous, as might be supposed, to check the dangerous growth of the pestilential little republic of the north. His diplomatic agents, Millino at Madrid, Barberini at Paris, and the accomplished Bentivoglio, who had just been appointed to the nunciatura at Brussels, were indefatigable in their efforts to suppress the heresy and the insolent liberty of which the upstart commonwealth was the embodiment.

Especially Barberini exerted all the powers at his command to bring about a good understanding between the kings of France and Spain. He pictured to Henry, in darkest colours, the blight that would come over religion and civilization if the progress of the rebellious Netherlands could not be arrested. The United Provinces were becoming dangerous, if they remained free, not only to the French kingdom, but to the very existence of monarchy throughout the world.

No potentate was ever more interested, so it was urged, than Henry IV. to bring down the pride of the Dutch rebels. There was always sympathy of thought and action between the Huguenots of France and their co-religionists in Holland. They were all believers alike in Calvinism—a sect inimical not less to temporal monarchies than to the sovereign primacy of the Church—and the tendency and purposes of the French rebels were already sufficiently manifest in their efforts, by means of the so-called cities of security, to erect a state within a state; to introduce, in short, a Dutch republic into France.

A sovereign remedy for the disease of liberty, now threatening to become epidemic in Europe, would be found in a marriage between the second son of the King of Spain and a daughter of France. As the archdukes were childless, it might be easily arranged that this youthful couple should succeed them—the result of which would of course be the reduction of all the Netherlands to their ancient obedience.

It has already been seen, and will become still farther apparent, that nostrums like this were to be recommended in other directions. Meantime, Jeannin and his colleagues made their appearance at the Hague.

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If there were a living politician in Europe capable of dealing with Barneveld on even terms, it was no doubt President Jeannin. An ancient Leaguer, an especial adherent of the Duke of Mayenne, he had been deep in all the various plots and counter-plots of the Guises, and often employed by the extinct confederacy in various important intrigues. Being secretly sent to Spain to solicit help for the League after the disasters of Ivry and Arques, he found Philip II. so sincerely imbued with the notion that France was a mere province of Spain, and so entirely bent upon securing the heritage of the Infanta to that large property, as to convince him that the maintenance of the Roman religion was with that monarch only a secondary condition. Aid and assistance for the confederacy were difficult of attainment, unless coupled with the guarantee of the Infanta's rights to reign in France.

The Guise faction being inspired solely by religious motives of the loftiest kind, were naturally dissatisfied with the lukewarmness of his most Catholic Majesty. When therefore the discomfited Mayenne subsequently concluded his bargain with the conqueror of Ivry, it was a matter of course that Jeannin should also make his peace with the successful Huguenot, now become eldest son of the Church. He was very soon taken into especial favour by Henry, who recognised his sagacity, and who knew his hands to be far cleaner than those of the more exalted Leaguers with whom he had dealt. The "good old fellow," as Henry familiarly called him, had not filled his pockets either in serving or when deserting the League. Placed in control of the exchequer at a later period, he was never accused of robbery or peculation. He was a hard-working, not overpaid, very intelligent public functionary. He was made president of the parliament, or supreme tribunal of Burgundy, and minister of state, and was recognised as one of the ablest jurists and most skilful politicians in the kingdom. An elderly man, with a tall, serene forehead, a large dark eye and a long grey beard, he presented an image of vast wisdom and reverend probity. He possessed—an especial treasure for a statesman in that plotting age—a singularly honest visage. Never was that face more guileless, never was his heart more completely worn upon his sleeve, than when he was harbouring the deepest or most dangerous designs. Such was the "good fellow," whom that skilful reader of men, Henry of France, had sent to represent his interests and his opinions at the approaching conferences. What were those opinions? Paul V. and his legates Barberini, Millino, and the rest, were well enough aware of the secret strings of the king's policy, and knew how to touch them with skill. Of all things past, Henry perhaps most regretted that not he, but the last and most wretched of the Valois line, was sovereign of France when the States-General came to Paris with that offer of sovereignty which had been so contumaciously refused.

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If the object were attainable, the ex-chief of the Huguenots still meant to be king of the Netherlands as sincerely as Philip II. had ever intended to be monarch of France. But Henry was too accurate a calculator of chances, and had bustled too much in the world of realities, to exhaust his strength in striving, year after year, for a manifest impossibility. The enthusiast, who had passed away at last from the dreams of the Escorial into the land of shadows, had spent a lifetime, and melted the wealth of an empire; but universal monarchy had never come forth from his crucible. The French king, although possessed likewise of an almost boundless faculty for ambitious visions, was capable of distinguishing cloud-land from substantial empire. Jeannin, as his envoy, would at any rate not reveal his master's secret aspirations to those with whom he came to deal, as openly as Philip had once unveiled himself to Jeannin.

There could be no doubt that peace at this epoch was the real interest of France. That kingdom was beginning to flourish again, owing to the very considerable administrative genius of Bethune, an accomplished financier according to the lights of the age, and still more by reason of the general impoverishment of the great feudal houses and of the clergy. The result of the almost interminable series of civil and religious wars had been to cause a general redistribution of property. Capital was mainly in the hands of the middle and lower classes, and the consequence of this general circulation of wealth through all the channels of society was precisely what might have been expected, an increase of enterprise and of productive industry in various branches. Although the financial wisdom of the age was doing its best to impede commerce, to prevent the influx of foreign wares, to prohibit the outflow of specie—in obedience to the universal superstition, which was destined to survive so many centuries, that gold and silver alone constituted wealth—while, at the same time, in deference to the idiotic principle of sumptuary legislation, it was vigorously opposing mulberry culture, silk manufactures, and other creations of luxury, which, in spite of the hostility of government sages, were destined from that time forward to become better mines of wealth for the kingdom than the Indies had been for Spain, yet on the whole the arts of peace were in the ascendant in France.

The king, although an unscrupulous, self-seeking despot and the coarsest of voluptuaries, was at least a man of genius. He had also too much shrewd mother-wit to pursue such schemes as experience had shown to possess no reality. The talisman "Espoir," emblazoned on his shield, had led him to so much that it was natural for him at times to think all things possible.

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But he knew how to renounce as well as how to dare. He had abandoned his hope to be declared Prince of Wales and successor to the English crown, which he had cherished for a brief period, at the epoch of the Essex conspiracy; he had forgotten his magnificent dream of placing the crown of the holy German empire upon his head, and if he still secretly resolved to annex the Netherlands to his realms, and to destroy his excellent ally, the usurping, rebellious, and heretic Dutch republic, he had craft enough to work towards his aim in the dark, and the common sense to know that by now throwing down the mask he would be for ever baffled of his purpose.

The history of France, during the last three-quarters of a century, had made almost every Frenchman, old enough to bear arms, an accomplished soldier. Henry boasted that the kingdom could put three hundred thousand veterans into the field—a high figure, when it is recollected that its population certainly did not exceed fifteen millions. No man however was better aware than he, that in spite, of the apparent pacification of parties, the three hundred thousand would not be all on one side, even in case of a foreign war. There were at least four thousand great feudal lords as faithful to the Huguenot faith and cause as he had been false to both; many of them still wealthy, notwithstanding the general ruin which had swept over the high nobility, and all of them with vast influence and a splendid following, both among the lesser gentry and the men of lower rank.

Although he kept a Jesuit priest ever at his elbow, and did his best to persuade the world and perhaps himself that he had become a devout Catholic, in consequence of those memorable five hours' instruction from the Bishop of Bourges, and that there was no hope for France save in its return to the bosom of the Church, he was yet too politic and too farseeing to doubt that for him to oppress the Protestants would be not only suicidal, but, what was worse in his eyes, ridiculous.

He knew, too, that with thirty or forty thousand fighting-men in the field, with seven hundred and forty churches in the various provinces for their places of worship, with all the best fortresses in France in their possession, with leaders like Rohan, Lesdiguières, Bouillon, and many others, and with the most virtuous, self-denying, Christian government, established and maintained by themselves, it would be madness for him and his dynasty to deny the Protestants their political and religious liberty, or to attempt a crusade against their brethren in the Netherlands.

France was far more powerful than Spain, although the world had not yet recognised the fact. Yet it would have been difficult for both united to crush the new commonwealth, however paradoxical such a proposition seemed to contemporaries.

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Sully was conscientiously in favour of peace, and Sully was the one great minister of France. Not a Lerma, certainly; for France was not Spain, nor was Henry IV. a Philip III. The Huguenot duke was an inferior financier to his Spanish contemporary, if it were the height of financial skill for a minister to exhaust the resources of a great kingdom in order to fill his own pocket. Sully certainly did not neglect his own interests, for he had accumulated a fortune of at least seventy thousand dollars a year, besides a cash capital estimated at a million and a half. But while enriching himself, he had wonderfully improved the condition of the royal treasury. He had reformed many abuses and opened many new sources of income. He had, of course, not accomplished the whole Augean task of purification. He was a vigorous Huguenot, but no Hercules, and demigods might have shrunk appalled at the filthy mass of corruption which great European kingdoms everywhere presented to the reformer's eye. Compared to the Spanish Government, that of France might almost have been considered virtuous, yet even there everything was venal.

To negotiate was to bribe right and left, and at every step. All the ministers and great functionaries received presents, as a matter of course, and it was necessary to pave the pathway even of their ante-chambers with gold.

The king was fully aware of the practice, but winked at it, because his servants, thus paid enormous sums by the public and by foreign Governments, were less importunate for rewards and salaries from himself.

One man in the kingdom was said to have clean hands, the venerable and sagacious chancellor, Pomponne de Bellievre. His wife, however, was less scrupulous, and readily disposed of influence and court-favour for a price, without the knowledge, so it was thought, of the great judge.

Jeannin, too, was esteemed a man of personal integrity, ancient Leaguer and tricky politician though he were.

Highest offices of magistracy and judicature, Church and State, were objects of a traffic almost as shameless as in Spain. The ermine was sold at auction, mitres were objects of public barter, Church preferments were bestowed upon female children in their cradles. Yet there was hope in France, notwithstanding that the Pragmatic Sanction of St. Louis, the foundation of the liberties of the Gallican Church, had been annulled by Francis, who had divided the seamless garment of Church patronage with Leo.

Those four thousand great Huguenot lords, those thirty thousand hard-fighting weavers, and blacksmiths, and other plebeians, those seven hundred and forty churches, those very substantial fortresses in every province of the kingdom, were better facts than the Holy Inquisition to preserve a great nation from sinking into the slough of political extinction.



Henry was most anxious that Sully should convert himself to the ancient Church, and the gossips of the day told each other that the duke had named his price for his conversion. To be made high constable of France, it was said would melt the resolve of the stiff Huguenot. To any other inducement or blandishment he was adamant. Whatever truth may have been in such chatter, it is certain that the duke never gratified his master's darling desire.

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Yet it was for no lack of attempts and intrigues on the part of the king, although it is not probable that he would have ever consented to bestow that august and coveted dignity upon a Bethune.

The king did his best by intrigue, by calumny, by talebearing, by inventions, to set the Huguenots against each other, and to excite the mutual jealousy of all his most trusted adherents, whether Protestant or Catholic. The most good-humoured, the least vindictive, the most ungrateful, the falsest of mankind, he made it his policy, as well as his pastime, to repeat, with any amount of embroidery that his most florid fancy could devise, every idle story or calumny that could possibly create bitter feeling and make mischief among those who surrounded him. Being aware that this propensity was thoroughly understood, he only multiplied fictions, so cunningly mingled with truths, as to leave his hearers quite unable to know what to believe and what to doubt. By such arts, force being impossible, he hoped one day to sever the band which held the conventicles together, and to reduce Protestantism to insignificance. He would have cut off the head of D'Aubigne or Duplessis Mornay to gain an object, and have not only pardoned but caressed and rewarded Biron when reeking from the conspiracy against his own life and crown, had he been willing to confess and ask pardon for his stupendous crime. He hated vindictive men almost as much as he despised those who were grateful.

He was therefore far from preferring Sully to Villeroy or Jeannin, but he was perfectly aware that, in financial matters at least, the duke was his best friend and an important pillar of the state.

The minister had succeeded in raising the annual revenue of France to nearly eleven millions of dollars, and in reducing the annual expenditures to a little more than ten millions. To have a balance on the right side of the public ledger was a feat less easily accomplished in those days even than in our own. Could the duke have restrained his sovereign's reckless extravagance in buildings, parks, hunting establishments, and harems, he might have accomplished even greater miracles. He lectured the king roundly, as a parent might remonstrate with a prodigal son, but it was impossible even for a Sully to rescue that hoary-headed and most indomitable youth from wantonness and riotous living. The civil-list of the king amounted to more than one-tenth of the whole revenue.

On the whole, however, it was clear, as France was then constituted and administered, that a general peace would be, for the time at least, most conducive to its interests, and Henry and his great minister were sincerely desirous of bringing about that result.

Preliminaries for a negotiation which should terminate this mighty war were now accordingly to be laid down at the Hague. Yet it would seem rather difficult to effect a compromise. Besides the powers less interested, but which nevertheless sent representatives to watch the proceedings—such as Sweden, Denmark, Brandenburg,

the Elector Palatine —there were Spain, France, England, the republic, and the archdukes.

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Spain knew very well that she could not continue the war; but she hoped by some quibbling recognition of an impossible independence to recover that authority over her ancient vassals which the sword had for the time struck down. Distraction in councils, personal rivalries, the well-known incapacity of a people to govern itself, commercial greediness, provincial hatreds, envies and jealousies, would soon reduce that jumble of cities and villages, which aped the airs of sovereignty, into insignificance and confusion. Adroit management would easily re-assert afterwards the sovereignty of the Lord's anointed. That a republic of freemen, a federation of independent states, could take its place among the nations did not deserve a serious thought.

Spain in her heart preferred therefore to treat. It was however indispensable that the Netherlands should reestablish the Catholic religion throughout the land, should abstain then and for ever from all insolent pretences to trade with India or America, and should punish such of their citizens as attempted to make voyages to the one or the other. With these trifling exceptions, the court of Madrid would look with favour on propositions made in behalf of the rebels.

France, as we have seen, secretly aspired to the sovereignty of all the Netherlands, if it could be had. She was also extremely in favour of excluding the Hollanders from the Indies, East and West. The king, fired with the achievements of the republic at sea, and admiring their great schemes for founding empires at the antipodes by means of commercial corporations, was very desirous of appropriating to his own benefit the experience, the audacity, the perseverance, the skill and the capital of their merchants and mariners. He secretly instructed his commissioners, therefore, and repeatedly urged it upon them, to do their best to procure the renunciation, on the part of the republic, of the Indian trade, and to contrive the transplantation into France of the mighty trading companies, so successfully established in Holland and Zeeland.

The plot thus to deprive the provinces of their India trade was supposed by the statesmen of the republic to have been formed in connivance with Spain. That power, finding itself half pushed from its seat of power in the East by the "grand and infallible society created by the United Provinces,"—[Memoir of Aerssens, *ubi sup*—]—would be but too happy to make use of this French intrigue in order to force the intruding Dutch navy from its conquests.

Olden-Barneveld, too politic to offend the powerful and treacherous ally by a flat refusal, said that the king's friendship was more precious than the India trade. At the same time he warned the French Government that, if they ruined the Dutch East India Company, "neither France nor any other nation would ever put its nose into India again."

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James of England, too, flattered himself that he could win for England that sovereignty of the Netherlands which England as well as France had so decidedly refused. The marriage of Prince Henry with the Spanish Infanta was the bait, steadily dangled before him by the politicians of the Spanish court, and he deluded himself with the thought that the Catholic king, on the death of the childless archdukes, would make his son and daughter-in-law a present of the obedient Netherlands. He already had some of the most important places in the United Netherlands—the famous cautionary towns in his grasp, and it should go hard but he would twist that possession into a sovereignty over the whole land. As for recognising the rebel provinces as an independent sovereignty, that was most abhorrent to him. Such a tampering with the great principles of Government was an offence against all crowned heads, a crime in which he was unwilling to participate.

His instinct against rebellion seemed like second sight. The king might almost be imagined to have foreseen in the dim future those memorable months in which the proudest triumph of the Dutch commonwealth was to be registered before the forum of Christendom at the congress of Westphalia, and in which the solemn trial and execution of his own son and successor, with the transformation of the monarchy of the Tudors and Stuarts into a British republic, were simultaneously to startle the world. But it hardly needed the gift of prophecy to inspire James with a fear of revolutions.

He was secretly desirous therefore, sustained by Salisbury and his other advisers, of effecting the restoration of the provinces to the dominion of his most Catholic Majesty. It was of course the interest of England that the Netherland rebels should renounce the India trade. So would James be spared the expense and trouble of war; so would the great doctrines of divine right be upheld; so would the way be paved towards the ultimate absorption of the Netherlands by England. Whether his theological expositions would find as attentive pupils when the pope's authority had been reestablished over all his neighbours; whether the Catholic rebels in Ireland would become more tranquil by the subjugation of the Protestant rebels in Holland; whether the principles of Guy Fawkes might not find more effective application, with no bulwark beyond the seas against the incursion of such practitioners—all this he did not perhaps sufficiently ponder.

Thus far had the discursive mind of James wandered from the position which it occupied at the epoch of Maximilian de Bethune's memorable embassy to England.

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The archdukes were disposed to quiet. On them fell the burthen of the war. Their little sovereignty, where—if they could only be allowed to expend the money squeezed from the obedient provinces in court diversions, stately architecture, splendid encouragement of the fine arts, and luxurious living, surrounded by a train of great nobles, fit to command regiments in the field or assist in the counsels of state, but chiefly occupied in putting dishes on the court table, handing ewers and napkins to their Highnesses, or in still more menial offices—so much enjoyment might be had, was reduced to a mere parade ground for Spanish soldiery. It was ridiculous, said the politicians of Madrid, to suppose that a great empire like Spain would not be continually at war in one direction or another, and would not perpetually require the use of large armies. Where then could there be a better mustering place for their forces than those very provinces, so easy of access, so opulent, so conveniently situate in the neighbourhood of Spain's most insolent enemies? It was all very fine for the archduke, who knew nothing of war, they declared, who had no hope of children, who longed only for a life of inglorious ease, such as he could have had as archbishop, to prate of peace and thus to compromise the dignity of the realm. On the contrary by making proper use of the Netherlands, the repose and grandeur of the monarchy would be secured, even should the war become eternal.

This prospect, not agreeable certainly for the archdukes or their subjects, was but little admired outside the Spanish court.

Such then were the sentiments of the archdukes, and such the schemes and visions of Spain, France, and England. On two or three points, those great powers were mainly, if unconsciously, agreed. The Netherlands should not be sovereign; they should renounce the India navigation; they should consent to the re-establishment of the Catholic religion.

On the other hand, the States-General knew their own minds, and made not the slightest secret of their intentions.

They would be sovereign, they would not renounce the India trade, they would not agree to the re-establishment of the Catholic religion.

Could the issue of the proposed negotiations be thought hopeful, or was another half century of warfare impending?

On the 28th May the French commissioners came before the States-General.

There had been many wild rumours flying through the provinces in regard to the king's secret designs upon the republic, especially since the visit made to the Hague a twelvemonth before by Francis Aerssens, States' resident at the French court. That diplomatist, as we know, had been secretly commissioned by Henry to feel the public pulse in regard to the sovereignty, so far as that could be done by very private and

delicate fingering. Although only two or three personages had been dealt with— the suggestions being made as the private views of the ambassadors only —there had been much gossip on the subject, not only in the Netherlands, but at the English and Spanish courts. Throughout the commonwealth there was a belief that Henry wished to make himself king of the country.

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As this happened to be the fact, it was natural that the President, according to the statecraft of his school, should deny it at once, and with an air of gentle melancholy.

Wearing therefore his most ingenuous expression, Jeannin addressed the assembly.

He assured the States that the king had never forgotten how much assistance he had received from them when he was struggling to conquer the kingdom legally belonging to him, and at a time when they too were fighting in their own country for their very existence.

The king thought that he had given so many proofs of his sincere friendship as to make doubt impossible; but he had found the contrary, for the States had accorded an armistice, and listened to overtures of peace, without deigning to consult him on the subject. They had proved, by beginning and concluding so important a transaction without his knowledge, that they regarded him with suspicion, and had no respect for his name. Whence came the causes of that suspicion it was difficult to imagine, unless from certain false rumours of propositions said to have been put forward in his behalf, although he had never authorised anyone to make them, by which men had been induced to believe that he aspired to the sovereignty of the provinces.

“This falsehood,” continued the candid President, “has cut our king to the heart, wounding him more deeply than anything else could have done. To make the armistice without his knowledge showed merely your contempt for him, and your want of faith in him. But he blamed not the action in itself, since you deemed it for your good, and God grant that you may not have been deceived. But to pretend that his Majesty wished to grow great at your expense, this was to do a wrong to his reputation, to his good faith, and to the desire which he has always shown to secure the prosperity of your state.” Much more spoke Jeannin, in this vein, assuring the assembly that those abominable falsehoods proceeded from the enemies of the king, and were designed expressly to sow discord and suspicion in the provinces. The reader, already aware of the minute and detailed arrangements made by Henry and his ministers for obtaining the sovereignty of the United Provinces and destroying their liberties, will know how to appreciate the eloquence of the ingenuous President.

After the usual commonplaces concerning the royal desire to protect his allies against wrong and oppression, and to advance their interests, the President suggested that the States should forthwith communicate the pending deliberations to all the kings and princes who had favoured their cause, and especially to the King of England, who had so thoroughly proved his desire to promote their welfare.

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As Jeannin had been secretly directed to pave the way by all possible means for the king's sovereignty over the provinces; as he was not long afterwards to receive explicit instructions to expend as much money as might be necessary in bribing Prince Maurice, Count Lewis William, Barneveld and his son, together with such others as might seem worth purchasing, in order to assist Henry in becoming monarch of their country; and as the English king was at that moment represented in Henry's private letters to the commissioners as actually loathing the liberty, power, and prosperity of the provinces, it must be conceded that the President had acquitted himself very handsomely in his first oration.

Such was the virtue of his honest face.

Barneveld answered with generalities and commonplaces. No man knew better than the Advocate the exact position of affairs; no man had more profoundly fathomed the present purposes of the French king; no man had more acutely scanned his character. But he knew the critical position of the commonwealth. He knew that, although the public revenue might be raised by extraordinary and spasmodic exertion to nearly a million sterling, a larger income than had ever been at the disposition of the great Queen of England, the annual deficit might be six millions of florins—more than half the revenue—if the war continued, and that there was necessity of peace, could the substantial objects of the war be now obtained. He was well aware too of the subtle and scheming brain which lay hid beneath that reverend brow of the President, although he felt capable of coping with him in debate or intrigue. Doubtless he was inspired with as much ardour for the intellectual conflict as Henry might have experienced on some great field-day with Alexander Farnese.

On this occasion, however, Barneveld preferred to glide gently over the rumours concerning Henry's schemes. Those reports had doubtless emanated, he said, from the enemies of Netherland prosperity. The private conclusion of the armistice he defended on the ground of necessity, and of temporary financial embarrassment, and he promised that deputies should at once be appointed to confer with the royal commissioners in regard to the whole subject.

In private, he assured Jeannin that the communications of Aerssens had only been discussed in secret, and had not been confided to more than three or four persons.

The Advocate, although the leader of the peace party, was by no means over anxious for peace.

The object of much insane obloquy, because disposed to secure that blessing for his country on the basis of freedom and independence, he was not disposed to trust in the sincerity of the archdukes, or the Spanish court, or the French king. "Timeo Danaos etiam dona ferentes," he had lately said to Aerssens. Knowing that the resistance of the

Netherlands had been forty years long the bulwark of Europe against the designs of the Spaniard for

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universal empire, he believed the republic justified in expecting the support of the leading powers in the negotiations now proposed. "Had it not been for the opposition of these provinces," he said, "he might, in the opinion of the wisest, have long ago been monarch of all Europe, with small expense of men, money, or credit." He was far from believing therefore that Spain, which had sacrificed, according to his estimate, three hundred thousand soldiers and two hundred million ducats in vain endeavours to destroy the resistance of the United Provinces, was now ready to lay aside her vengeance and submit to a sincere peace. Rather he thought to see "the lambkins, now frisking so innocently about the commonwealth, suddenly transform themselves into lions and wolves." It would be a fatal error, he said, to precipitate the dear fatherland into the net of a simulated negotiation, from unwise impatience for peace. The Netherlands were a simple, truthful people and could hope for no advantage in dealing with Spanish friars, nor discover all the danger and deceit lurking beneath their fair words. Thus the man, whom his enemies perpetually accused of being bought by the enemy, of wishing peace at any price, of wishing to bring back the Catholic party and ecclesiastical influence to the Netherlands, was vigorously denouncing a precipitate peace, and warning his countrymen of the danger of premature negotiations.

"As one can hardly know the purity and value of gold," he said, "without testing it, so it is much more difficult to distinguish a false peace from a genuine one; for one can never touch it nor taste it; and one learns the difference when one is cheated and lost. Ignorant people think peace negotiations as simple as a private lawsuit. Many sensible persons even think that; the enemy once recognising us for a free, sovereign state, we shall be in the same position as England and France, which powers have lately made peace with the archdukes and with Spain. But we shall find a mighty difference. Moreover, in those kingdoms the Spanish king has since the peace been ever busy corrupting their officers of state and their subjects, and exciting rebellion and murder within their realms, as all the world must confess. And the English merchants complain that they have suffered more injustice, violence, and wrong from the Spaniards since the peace than they did during the war."

The Advocate also reminded his countrymen that the archduke, being a vassal of Spain, could not bind that power by his own signature, and that there was no proof that the king would renounce his pretended rights to the provinces. If he affected to do so, it would only be to put the republic to sleep. He referred, with much significance, to the late proceedings of the Admiral of Arragon at Emmerich, who refused to release that city according to his plighted word, saying roundly that whatever he might sign and seal one day he would not hesitate absolutely to violate on the next if the king's service was thereby to be benefited.

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With such people, who had always learned law-doctors and ghostly confessors to strengthen and to absolve them, they could never expect anything but broken faith and contempt for treaties however solemnly ratified.

Should an armistice be agreed upon and negotiations begun, the Advocate urged that the work of corruption and bribery would not be a moment delayed, and although the Netherlanders were above all nations a true and faithful race, it could hardly be hoped that no individuals would be gained over by the enemy.

“For the whole country,” said Barneveld, “would swarm with Jesuits, priests, and monks, with calumnies and corruptions—the machinery by which the enemy is wont to produce discord, relying for success upon the well-known maxim of Philip of Macedon, who considered no city impregnable into which he could send an ass laden with gold.”

The Advocate was charged too with being unfriendly to the India trade, especially to the West India Company.

He took the opportunity, however, to enlarge with emphasis and eloquence upon that traffic as constituting the very lifeblood of the country.

“The commerce with the East Indies is going on so prosperously,” he said, “that not only our own inhabitants but all strangers are amazed. The West India Company is sufficiently prepared, and will cost the commonwealth so little, that the investment will be inconsiderable in comparison with the profits. And all our dangers and difficulties have nearly vanished since the magnificent victory of Gibraltar, by which the enemy’s ships, artillery, and sailors have been annihilated, and proof afforded that the Spanish galleys are not so terrible as they pretend to be. By means of this trade to both the Indies, matters will soon be brought into such condition that the Spaniards will be driven out of all those regions and deprived of their traffic. Thus will the great wolf’s teeth be pulled out, and we need have no farther fear of his biting again. Then we may hope for a firm and assured peace, and may keep the Indies, with the whole navigation thereon depending, for ourselves, sharing it freely and in common with our allies.”

Certainly no statesman could more strongly depict the dangers of a pusillanimous treaty, and the splendid future of the republic, if she held fast to her resolve for political independence, free religion, and free trade, than did the great Advocate at this momentous epoch of European history.

Had he really dreamed of surrendering the republic to Spain, that republic whose resistance ever since the middle of the previous century had been all that had saved Europe, in the opinion of learned and experienced thinkers, from the universal empire of Spain—had the calumnies, or even a thousandth part of the calumnies, against him been true—how different might have been the history of human liberty!

Soon afterwards, in accordance with the suggestions of the French king and with their own previous intentions, a special legation was despatched by the States to England, in order to notify the approaching conferences to the sovereign of that country, and to invite his participation in the proceedings.

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The States' envoys were graciously received by James, who soon appointed Richard Spencer and Ralph Winwood as commissioners to the Hague, duly instructed to assist at the deliberations, and especially to keep a sharp watch upon French intrigues. There were also missions and invitations to Denmark and to the Electors Palatine and of Brandenburg, the two latter potentates having, during the past three years, assisted the States with a hundred thousand florins annually.

The news of the great victory at Gibraltar had reached the Netherlands almost simultaneously with the arrival of the French commissioners. It was thought probable that John Neyen had received the weighty intelligence some days earlier, and the intense eagerness of the archdukes and of the Spanish Government to procure the recal of the Dutch fleet was thus satisfactorily explained. Very naturally this magnificent success, clouded though it was by the death of the hero to whom it was due, increased the confidence of the States in the justice of their cause and the strength of their position.

Once more, it is not entirely idle to consider the effect of scientific progress on the march of human affairs, as so often exemplified in history. Whether that half-century of continuous war would have been possible with the artillery, means of locomotion, and other machinery of destruction and communication now so terribly familiar to the world, can hardly be a question. The preterhuman prolixity of negotiation which appals us in the days when steam and electricity had not yet annihilated time and space, ought also to be obsolete. At a period when the news of a great victory was thirty days on its travels from Gibraltar to Flushing, aged counsellors justified themselves in a solemn consumption of time such as might have exasperated Jared or Methuselah in his boyhood. Men fought as if war was the normal condition of humanity, and negotiated as if they were all immortal. But has the art political kept pace with the advancement of physical science? If history be valuable for the examples it furnishes both for imitation and avoidance, then the process by which these peace conferences were initiated and conducted may be wholesome food for reflection.

John Neyen, who, since his secret transactions already described at the Hague and Fort Lillo, had been speeding back and forth between Brussels, London, and Madrid, had once more returned to the Netherlands, and had been permitted to reside privately at Delft until the king's ratification should arrive from Spain.

While thus established, the industrious friar had occupied his leisure in studying the situation of affairs. Especially he had felt inclined to renew some of those little commercial speculations which had recently proved so comfortable in the case of Dirk van der Does. Recorder Cornelius Aerssens came frequently to visit him, with the private consent of the Government, and it at once struck the friar

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that Cornelius would be a judicious investment. So he informed the recorder that the archdukes had been much touched with his adroitness and zeal in facilitating the entrance of their secret agent into the presence of the Prince and the Advocate. Cruwel, in whose company the disguised Neyen had made his first journey to the Hague, was a near relative of Aerssena, The honest monk accordingly, in recognition of past and expected services, begged one day the recorder's acceptance of a bill, drawn by Marquis Spinola on Henry Beckman, merchant of Amsterdam, for eighty thousand ducats. He also produced a diamond ring, valued at ten thousand florins, which he ventured to think worthy the acceptance of Madame Aerssens. Furthermore, he declared himself ready to pay fifteen thousand crowns in cash, on account of the bill, whenever it might be, desired, and observed that the archdukes had ordered the house which the recorder had formerly occupied in Brussels to be reconveyed to him. Other good things were in store, it was delicately hinted, as soon as they had been earned.

Aerssens expressed his thanks for the house, which, he said, legally belonged to him according to the terms of the surrender of Brussels. He hesitated in regard to the rest, but decided finally to accept the bill of exchange and the diamond, apprising Prince Maurice and Olden-Barneveld of the fact, however, on his return to the Hague. Being subsequently summoned by Neyen to accept the fifteen thousand crowns, he felt embarrassed at the compromising position in which he had placed himself. He decided accordingly to make a public statement of the affair to the States-General. This was done, and the States placed the ring and the bill in the hands of their treasurer, Joris de Bie.

The recorder never got the eighty thousand ducats, nor his wife the diamond; but although there had been no duplicity on his part, he got plenty of slander. His evil genius had prompted him, not to listen seriously to the temptings of the monk, but to deal with him on his own terms. He was obliged to justify himself against public suspicion with explanations and pamphlets, but some taint of the calumny stuck by him to the last.

Meantime, the three months allotted for the reception of Philip's ratification had nearly expired. In March, the royal Government had expressly consented that the archdukes should treat with the rebels on the ground of their independence. In June that royal permission had been withdrawn, exactly because the independence could never be acknowledged. Albert, naturally enough indignant at such double-dealing, wrote to the king that his disapprobation was incomprehensible, as the concession of independence had been made by direct command of Philip. "I am much amazed," he said, "that, having treated with the islanders on condition of leaving them free, by express order of your Majesty (which you must doubtless very well remember), your Majesty now reproves my conduct, and declares your dissatisfaction." At last, on the 23rd July,

Spinola requested a safe conduct for Louis Verreyken, auditor of the council at Brussels, to come to the Hague.

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On the 23rd of July that functionary accordingly arrived. He came before Prince Maurice and fifty deputies of the States-General, and exhibited the document. At the same time he urged them, now that the long-desired ratification had been produced, to fulfil at once their promise, and to recal their fleet from the coast of Spain.

Verreyken was requested to withdraw while the instrument was examined. When recalled, he was informed that the States had the most straight-forward intention to negotiate, but that the royal document did not at all answer their expectation. As few of the delegates could read Spanish, it would first of all be necessary to cause it to be translated.

When that was done they would be able to express their opinion concerning it and come to a decision in regard to the recal of the fleet. This ended the proceedings on that occasion.

Next day Prince Maurice invited Verreyken and others to dine. After dinner the stadholder informed him that the answer of the States might soon be expected; at the same time expressing his regret that the king should have sent such an instrument. It was very necessary, said the prince, to have plain speaking, and he, for one, had never believed that the king would send a proper ratification. The one exhibited was not at all to the purpose. The king was expected to express himself as clearly as the archdukes had done in their instrument. He must agree to treat with the States-General as with people entirely free, over whom he claimed no authority. If the king should refuse to make this public declaration, the States would at once break off all negotiations.

Three days afterwards, seven deputies conferred with Verreyken. Barneveld, as spokesman, declared that, so far as the provinces were concerned, the path was plain and open to an honest, ingenuous, lasting peace, but that the manner of dealing on the other side was artificial and provocative of suspicion. A most important line, which had been placed by the States at the very beginning of the form suggested by them, was wanting in the ratification now received. This hardly seemed an accidental omission. The whole document was constrained and defective. It was necessary to deal with Netherlanders in clear and simple language. The basis of any possible negotiation was that the provinces were to be treated with as and called entirely free. Unless this was done negotiations were impossible. The States-General were not so unskilled in affairs as to be ignorant that the king and the archdukes were quite capable, at a future day, of declaring themselves untrammelled by any conditions. They would boast that conventions with rebels and pledges to heretics were alike invalid. If Verreyken had brought no better document than the one presented, he had better go at once. His stay in the provinces was superfluous.

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At a subsequent interview Barneveld informed Verreyken that the king's confirmation had been unanimously rejected by the States-General as deficient both in form and substance. He added that the people of the provinces were growing very lukewarm in regard to peace, that Prince Maurice opposed it, that many persons regretted the length to which the negotiations had already gone. Difficult as it seemed to be to recede, the archdukes might be certain that a complete rupture was imminent.

All these private conversations of Barneveld, who was known to be the chief of the peace party, were duly reported by Verreyken in secret notes to the archduke and to Spinola. Of course they produced their effect. It surely might have been seen that the tricks and shifts of an antiquated diplomacy were entirely out of place if any wholesome result were desired. But the habit of dissimulation was inveterate. That the man who cannot dissemble is unfit to reign, was perhaps the only one of his father's golden rules which Philip III. could thoroughly comprehend, even if it be assumed that the monarch was at all consulted in regard to this most important transaction of his life. Verreyken and the friar knew very well when they brought the document that it would be spurned by the States, and yet they were also thoroughly aware that it was the king's interest to, begin the negotiations as soon as possible. When thus privately and solemnly assured by the Advocate that they were really wasting their time by being the bearers of these royal evasions, they learned therefore nothing positively new, but were able to assure their employers that to thoroughly disgust the peace party was not precisely the mode of terminating the war.

Verreyken now received public and formal notification that a new instrument must be procured from the king. In the ratification which had been sent, that monarch spoke of the archdukes as princes and sovereign proprietors of all the Netherlands. The clause by which, according to the form prescribed by the States, and already adopted by the archdukes, the United Provinces were described as free countries over which no authority was claimed had been calmly omitted, as if, by such a subterfuge, the independence of the republic could be winked out of existence. Furthermore, it was objected that the document was in Spanish, that it was upon paper instead of parchment, that it was not sealed with the great, but with the little seal, and that it was subscribed.

"I the King." This signature might be very appropriate for decrees issued by a monarch to his vassals, but could not be rightly appended, it was urged, to an instrument addressed to a foreign power. Potentates, treating with the States-General of the United Provinces, were expected to sign their names.

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Whatever may be thought of the technical requirements in regard to the parchment, the signature, and the seal, it would be difficult to characterize too strongly the polity of the Spanish Government in the most essential point. To seek relief from the necessity of recognising—at least in the sense of similitude, according to the subtlety of Bentivoglio—the freedom of the provinces, simply by running the pen through the most important line of a most important document, was diplomacy in its dotage. Had not Marquis Spinola, a man who could use his brains and his pen as well as his sword, expressly implored the politicians of Madrid not to change even a comma in the form of ratification which he sent to Spain?

Verreyken, placed face to face with plain-spoken, straightforward, strong-minded men, felt the dreary absurdity of the position. He could only stammer a ridiculous excuse about the clause, having been accidentally left out by a copying secretary. To represent so important an omission as a clerical error was almost as great an absurdity as the original device; but it was necessary for Verreyken to say something.

He promised, however, that the form prescribed by the States should be again transmitted to Madrid, and expressed confidence that the ratification would now be sent as desired. Meantime he trusted that the fleet would be at once recalled.

This at once created a stormy debate which lasted many days, both within the walls of the House of Assembly and out of doors. Prince Maurice bitterly denounced the proposition, and asserted the necessity rather of sending out more ships than of permitting their cruisers to return. It was well known that the Spanish Government, since the destruction of Avila's fleet, had been straining every nerve to procure and equip other war-vessels, and that even the Duke of Lerma had offered a small portion of his immense plunderings to the crown in aid of naval armaments.

On the other hand, Barneveld urged that the States, in the preliminary armistice, had already agreed to send no munitions nor reinforcements to the fleet already cruising on the coasts of the peninsula. It would be better, therefore, to recal those ships than to leave them where they could not be victualled nor strengthened without a violation of good faith.

These opinions prevailed, and on the 9th August, Verreyken was summoned before the Assembly, and informed by Barneveld that the States had decided to withdraw the fleet, and to declare invalid all prizes made six weeks after that date.

This was done, it was said, out of respect to the archdukes, to whom no blame was imputed for the negligence displayed in regard to the ratification. Furthermore, the auditor was requested to inform his masters that the documents brought from Spain were not satisfactory, and he was furnished with a draught, made both in Latin and French. With this form, it was added, the king was to comply within six weeks, if he desired to proceed further in negotiations with the States.

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Verreyken thanked the States-General, made the best of promises, and courteously withdrew.

Next day, however, just as his preparations for departure had been made, he was once more summoned before the Assembly to meet with a somewhat disagreeable surprise. Barneveld, speaking as usual in behalf of the States-General, publicly produced Spinola's bill of exchange for eighty thousand ducats, the diamond ring intended for Madame Aerssens, and the gold chain given to Dirk van der Does, and expressed the feelings of the republican Government in regard to those barefaced attempts of Friar John at bribery and corruption, in very scornful language? Netherlanders were not to be bought—so the agent of Spain and of the archdukes was informed—and, even if the citizens were venal, it would be necessary in a popular Government to buy up the whole nation. "It is not in our commonwealth as in despotisms," said the Advocate, "where affairs of state are directed by the nod of two or three individuals, while the rest of the inhabitants are a mob of slaves. By turns, we all govern and are governed. This great council, this senate—should it seem not sufficiently fortified against your presents—could easily be enlarged. Here is your chain, your ring, your banker's draught. Take them all back to your masters. Such gifts are not necessary to ensure a just peace, while to accept them would be a crime against liberty, which we are incapable of committing."

Verreyken, astonished and abashed, could answer little save to mutter a few words about the greediness of monks, who, judging everyone else by themselves, thought no one inaccessible to a bribe. He protested the innocence of the archdukes in the matter, who had given no directions to bribe, and who were quite ignorant that the attempt had been made.

He did not explain by whose authority the chain, the ring, and the draught upon Beckman had been furnished to the friar.

Meantime that ecclesiastic was cheerfully wending his way to Spain in search of the new ratification, leaving his colleague vicariously to bide the pelting of the republican storm, and to return somewhat weather-beaten to Brussels.

During the suspension, thus ridiculously and gratuitously caused, of preliminaries which had already lasted the better portion of a year, party-spirit was rising day by day higher, and spreading more widely throughout the provinces. Opinions and sentiments were now sharply defined and loudly announced. The clergy, from a thousand pulpits, thundered against the peace, exposing the insidious practices, the faithless promises, the monkish corruptions, by which the attempt was making to reduce the free republic once more into vassalage to Spain. The people everywhere listened eagerly and applauded. Especially the mariners, cordwainers, smiths, ship-chandlers, boatmen, the tapestry weavers, lace-manufacturers, shopkeepers, and, above all, the India merchants and stockholders in the great commercial companies for the East and West, lifted up their voices for war. This was the party of Prince Maurice, who made no secret

of his sentiments, and opposed, publicly and privately, the resumption of negotiations. Doubtless his adherents were the most numerous portion of the population.

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Barneveld, however, was omnipotent with the municipal governments, and although many individuals in those bodies were deeply interested in the India navigation and the great corporations, the Advocate turned them as usual around his finger.

Ever since the memorable day of Nieuport there had been no love lost between the stadholder and the Advocate. They had been nominally reconciled to each other, and had, until lately, acted with tolerable harmony, but each was thoroughly conscious of the divergence of their respective aims.

Exactly at this period the long-smothered resentment of Maurice against his old preceptor, counsellor, and, as he believed, betrayer, flamed forth anew. He was indignant that a man, so infinitely beneath him in degree, should thus dare to cross his plans, to hazard, as he believed, the best interests of the state, and to interfere with the course of his legitimate ambition. There was more glory for a great soldier to earn in future battle-fields, a higher position before the world to be won. He had a right by birth, by personal and family service, to claim admittance among the monarchs of Europe. The pistol of Balthasar Gerard had alone prevented the elevation of his father to the sovereignty of the provinces. The patents, wanting only a few formalities, were still in possession of the son. As the war went on—and nothing but blind belief in Spanish treachery could cause the acceptance of a peace which would be found to mean slavery—there was no height to which he might not climb. With the return of peace and submission, his occupation would be gone, obscurity and poverty the sole recompense for his life long services and the sacrifices of his family. The memory of the secret movements twice made but a few years before to elevate him to the sovereignty, and which he believed to have been baffled by the Advocate, doubtless rankled in his breast. He did not forget that when the subject had been discussed by the favourers of the scheme in Barneveld's own house, Barneveld himself had prophesied that one day or another "the rights would burst out which his Excellency had to become prince of the provinces, on strength of the signed and sealed documents addressed to the late Prince of Orange; that he had further alluded to the efforts then on foot to make him Duke of Gelderland; adding with a sneer, that Zeeland was all agog on the subject, while in that province there were individuals very desirous of becoming children of Zebedee."

Barneveld, on his part, although accustomed to speak in public of his Excellency Prince Maurice in terms of profoundest respect, did not fail to communicate in influential quarters his fears that the prince was inspired by excessive ambition, and that he desired to protract the war, not for the good of the commonwealth, but for the attainment of greater power in the state. The envoys of France, expressly instructed on that subject by the king, whose purposes would be frustrated if the ill-blood between these eminent personages could not be healed, did their best to bring about a better understanding, but with hardly more than an apparent success.

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Once more there were stories flying about that the stadholder had called the Advocate liar, and that he had struck him or offered to strike him— tales as void of truth, doubtless, as those so rife after the battle of Nieuport, but which indicated the exasperation which existed.

When the news of the rejection of the King's ratification reached Madrid, the indignation of the royal conscience-keepers was vehement.

That the potentate of so large a portion of the universe should be treated by those lately his subjects with less respect than that due from equals to equals, seemed intolerable. So thoroughly inspired, however, was the king by the love of religion and the public good—as he informed Marquis Spinola by letter—and so intense was his desire for the termination of that disastrous war, that he did not hesitate indulgently to grant what had been so obstinately demanded. Little was to be expected, he said, from the stubbornness of the provinces, and from their extraordinary manner of transacting business, but looking, nevertheless, only to divine duty, and preferring its dictates to a selfish regard for his own interests, he had resolved to concede that liberty to the provinces which had been so importunately claimed. He however imposed the condition that the States should permit free and public exercise of the Catholic religion throughout their territories, and that so long as such worship was unobstructed, so long and no longer should the liberty now conceded to the provinces endure.

“Thus did this excellent prince,” says an eloquent Jesuit, “prefer obedience to the Church before subjection to himself, and insist that those, whom he emancipated from his own dominions, should still be loyal to the sovereignty of the Pope.”

Friar John, who had brought the last intelligence from the Netherlands, might have found it difficult, if consulted, to inform the king how many bills of exchange would be necessary to force this wonderful condition on the Government of the provinces. That the republic should accept that liberty as a boon which she had won with the red right hand, and should establish within her domains as many agents for Spanish reaction as there were Roman priests, monks, and Jesuits to be found, was not very probable. It was not thus nor then that the great lesson of religious equality and liberty for all men—the inevitable result of the Dutch revolt—was to be expounded. The insertion of such a condition in the preamble to a treaty with a foreign power would have been a desertion on the part of the Netherlands of the very principle of religious or civil freedom.

The monk, however, had convinced the Spanish Government that in six months after peace had been made the States would gladly accept the dominion of Spain once more, or, at the very least, would annex themselves to the obedient Netherlands under the sceptre of the archdukes.

Secondly, he assured the duke that they would publicly and totally renounce all connection with France.

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Thirdly, he pledged himself that the exercise of the Catholic religion would be as free as that of any other creed.

And the duke of Lerma believed it all: such and no greater was his capacity for understanding the course of events which he imagined himself to be directing. Certainly Friar John did not believe what he said.

“Master Monk is not quite so sure of his stick as he pretends to be,” said Secretary-of-State Villeroy. Of course, no one knew better the absurdity of those assurances than Master Monk himself.

“It may be that he has held such language,” said Jeannin, “in order to accomplish his object in Spain. But ’tis all dreaming and moonshine, which one should laugh at rather than treat seriously. These people here mean to be sovereign for ever and will make no peace except on that condition. This grandeur and vanity have entered so deeply into their brains that they will be torn into little pieces rather than give it up.”

Spinola, as acute a politician as he was a brilliant commander, at once demonstrated to his Government the impotence of such senile attempts. No definite agreements could be made, he wrote, except by a general convention. Before a treaty of peace, no permission would be given by the States to the public exercise of the Catholic religion, for fear of giving offence to what were called the Protestant powers. Unless they saw the proper ratification they would enter into no negotiations at all. When the negotiations had produced a treaty, the Catholic worship might be demanded. Thus peace might be made, and the desired conditions secured, or all parties would remain as they had been.

The Spanish Government replied by sending a double form of ratification. It would not have been the Spanish Government, had one simple, straightforward document been sent. Plenty of letters came at the same time, triumphantly refuting the objections and arguments of the States-General. To sign “Yo el Rey” had been the custom of the king’s ancestors in dealing with foreign powers. Thus had Philip II. signed the treaty of Vervins. Thus had the reigning king confirmed the treaty of Vervins. Thus had he signed the recent treaty with England as well as other conventions with other potentates. If the French envoys at the Hague said the contrary they erred from ignorance or from baser reasons. The provinces could not be declared free until Catholic worship was conceded. The donations must be mutual and simultaneous and the States would gain a much more stable and diuturnal liberty, founded not upon a simple declaration, but lawfully granted them as a compensation for a just and pious work performed. To this end the king sent ratification number one in which his sentiments were fully expressed. If, however, the provinces were resolved not to defer the declaration so ardently desired and to refuse all negotiation until they had received it, then ratification number two, therewith sent and drawn up in the required form, might be used. It was, however, to be exhibited but not delivered. The provinces would then

see the clemency with which they were treated by the king, and all the world might know that it was not his fault if peace were not made.

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Thus the politicians of Madrid; speaking in the name of their august sovereign and signing “Yo el Rey” for him without troubling him even to look at the documents.

When these letters arrived, the time fixed by the States for accepting the ratification had run out, and their patience was well-nigh exhausted. The archduke held council with Spinola, Verreyken, Richardot, and others, and it was agreed that ratification number two, in which the Catholic worship was not mentioned, should be forthwith sent to the States. Certainly no other conclusion could have been reached, and it was fortunate that a lucid interval in the deliberations of the ‘lunati ceat’ Madrid had furnished the archduke with an alternative. Had it been otherwise and had number one been presented, with all the accompanying illustrations, the same dismal comedy might have gone on indefinitely until the Dutchmen hissed it away and returned to their tragic business once more.

On the 25th October, Friar John and Verreyken came before the States-General, more than a hundred members being present, besides Prince Maurice and Count Lewis William.

The monk stated that he had faithfully represented to his Majesty at Madrid the sincere, straightforward, and undissembling proceedings of their lordships in these negotiations. He had also explained the constitution of their Government and had succeeded in obtaining from his royal Majesty the desired ratification, after due deliberation with the council. This would now give the assurance of a firm and durable peace, continued Neyen, even if his Majesty should come one day to die—being mortal. Otherwise, there might be inconveniences to fear. Now, however, the document was complete in all its parts, so far as regarded what was principal and essential, and in conformity with the form transmitted by the States-General. “God the Omnipotent knows,” proceeded the friar, “how sincere is my intention in this treaty of peace as a means of delivering the Netherlands from the miseries of war, as your lordships will perceive by the form of the agreement, explaining itself and making manifest its pure and undissembling intentions, promising nothing and engaging to nothing which will not be effectually performed. This would not be the case if his Majesty were proceeding by finesse or deception. The ratification might be nakedly produced as demanded, without any other explanation. But his Majesty, acting in good faith, has now declared his last determination in order to avoid anything that might be disputed at some future day, as your lordships will see more amply when the auditor has exhibited the document.”

When the friar had finished Verreyken spoke.

He reminded them of the proofs already given by the archdukes of their sincere desire to change the long and sanguinary war into a good and assured peace. Their lordships the States had seen how liberally, sincerely, and roundly their Highnesses had agreed to all demands and had procured the ratification of his Majesty, even although nothing had been proposed in that regard at the beginning of the negotiations.

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He then produced the original document, together with two copies, one in French the other in Flemish, to be carefully collated by the States.

“It is true,” said the auditor, “that the original is not made out in Latin nor in French as your lordships demanded, but in Spanish, and in the same form and style as used by his Majesty in treating with all the kings, potentates, and republics of Christendom. To tell you the truth, it has seemed strange that there should be a wish to make so great and puissant a king change his style, such demand being contrary to all reason and equity, and more so as his Majesty is content with the style which your lordships have been pleased to adopt.”

The ratification was then exhibited.

It set forth that Don Philip, by grace of God King of Castile, Leon, Arragon, the Two Sicilies, Portugal, Navarre, and of fourteen or fifteen other European realms duly enumerated; King of the Eastern and Western Indies and of the continents on terra firma adjacent, King of Jerusalem, Archduke of Antioch, Duke of Burgundy, and King of the Ocean, having seen that the archdukes were content to treat with the States-General of the United Provinces in quality of, and as holding them for, countries, provinces, and free states over which they pretended to no authority; either by way of a perpetual peace or for a truce or suspension of arms for twelve, fifteen, or twenty years, at the choice of the said States, and knowing that the said most serene archdukes had promised to deliver the king’s ratification; had, after ripe deliberation with his council, and out of his certain wisdom and absolute royal power, made the present declarations, similar to the one made by the archdukes, for the accomplishment of the said promise so far as it concerned him:

“And we principally declare,” continued the King of Spain, Jerusalem, America, India, and the Ocean, “that we are content that in our name, and on our part, shall be treated with the said States in the quality of, and as held by us for, free countries, provinces, and states, over which we make no pretensions. Thus we approve and ratify every point of the said agreement, promising on faith and word of a king to guard and accomplish it as entirely as if we had consented to it from the beginning.”

“But we declare,” said the king, in conclusion, “that if the treaty for a peace or a truce of many years, by which the pretensions of both parties are to be arranged—as well in the matter of religion as all the surplus—shall not be concluded, then this ratification shall be of no effect and as if it never had been made and, in virtue of it, we are not to lose a single point of our right, nor the United Provinces to acquire one, but things are to remain, so far as regards the rights of the two parties, exactly as they what to each shall seem best.”

Such were the much superfluous verbiage lopped away—which had been signed “I the King” at Madrid on the 18th September, and the two copies of which were presented to the States-General on the 25th October, the commissioners retaining the original.

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The papers were accepted, with a few general commonplaces by Barneveld meaning nothing, and an answer was promised after a brief delay.

A committee of seven, headed by the Advocate as chairman and spokesman, held a conference with the ambassadors of France and England, at four o'clock in the afternoon of the same day and another at ten o'clock next morning.

The States were not very well pleased with the ratification. What especially moved their discontent was the concluding clause, according to which it was intimated that if the pretensions of Spain in regard to religion were not fulfilled in the final treaty, the ratification was waste-paper and the king would continue to claim all his rights.

How much more loudly would they have vociferated, could they have looked into Friar John's wallet and have seen ratification number one! Then they would have learned that, after nearly a year of what was called negotiation, the king had still meant to demand the restoration of the Catholic worship before he would even begin to entertain the little fiction that the provinces were free.

As to the signature, the paper, and the Spanish language, those were minor matters. Indeed, it is difficult to say why the King of Spain should not issue a formal document in Spanish. It is doubtful whether, had he taken a fancy to read it, he could have understood it in any other tongue. Moreover, Spanish would seem the natural language for Spanish state-papers. Had he, as King of Jerusalem, America, or India, chosen the Hebrew, Aztec, or Sanscrit, in his negotiations with the United Provinces, there might have been more cause for dissatisfaction.

Jeannin, who was of course the leading spirit among the foreign members of the conference, advised the acceptance of the ratification. Notwithstanding the technical objections to its form, he urged that in substance it was in sufficient conformity to the draught furnished by the States. Nothing could be worse, in his opinion, for the provinces than to remain any longer suspended between peace and war. They would do well, therefore, to enter upon negotiations so soon as they had agreed among themselves upon three points.

They must fix the great indispensable terms which they meant to hold, and from which no arguments would ever induce them to recede. Thus they would save valuable time and be spared much frivolous discourse.

Next, they ought to establish a good interior government.

Thirdly, they should at once arrange their alliances and treaties with foreign powers, in order to render the peace to be negotiated a durable one.

As to the first and second of these points, the Netherlands needed no prompter. They had long ago settled the conditions without which they would make no treaty at all, and certainly it was not the States-General that had thus far been frivolously consuming time.

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As to the form of government, defective though it was, the leaders of the republic knew very well in whose interests such sly allusions to their domestic affairs were repeatedly ventured by the French envoys. In regard to treaties with foreign powers it was, of course, most desirable for the republic to obtain the formal alliance of France and England. Jeannin and his colleagues were ready to sign such a treaty, offensive and defensive, at once, but they found it impossible to induce the English ambassadors, with whom there was a conference on the 26th October, to come into any written engagement on the subject. They expressed approbation of the plan individually and in words, but deemed it best to avoid any protocol, by which their sovereign could be implicated in a promise. Should the negotiations for peace be broken off, it would be time enough to make a treaty to protect the provinces. Meantime, they ought to content themselves with the general assurance, already given them, that in case of war the monarchs of France and England would not abandon them, but would provide for their safety, either by succour or in some other way, so that they would be placed out of danger.

Such promises were vague without being magnificent, and, as James had never yet lifted his finger to assist the provinces, while indulging them frequently with oracular advice, it could hardly be expected that either the French envoys or the States-General would reckon very confidently on assistance from Great Britain, should war be renewed with Spain.

On the whole, it was agreed to draw up a paper briefly stating the opinion of the French and English plenipotentiaries that the provinces would do well to accept the ratification.

The committee of the States, with Barneveld as chairman, expressed acquiescence, but urged that they could not approve the clause in that document concerning religion. It looked as if the King of Spain wished to force them to consent by treaty that the Catholic religion should be re-established in their country. As they were free and sovereign, however, and so recognised by himself, it was not for him to meddle with such matters. They foresaw that this clause would create difficulties when the whole matter should be referred to the separate provinces, and that it would, perhaps, cause the entire rejection of the ratification.

The envoys, through the voice of Jeannin, remonstrated against such a course. After all, the objectionable clause, it was urged, should be considered only as a demand which the king was competent to make and it was not reasonable, they said, for the States to shut his mouth and prevent him from proposing what he thought good to propose.

On the other hand, they were not obliged to acquiesce in the proposition. In truth, it would be more expedient that the States themselves should grant this grace to the Catholics, thus earning their gratitude, rather than that it should be inserted in the treaty.

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A day or two later there was an interview between the French envoys and Count Lewis William, for whose sage, dispassionate, and upright character they had all a great respect. It was their object—in obedience to the repeated instructions of the French king—to make use of his great influence over Prince Maurice in favour of peace. It would be better, they urged, that the stadholder should act more in harmony with the States than he had done of late, and should reflect that, the ratification being good, there was really no means of preventing a peace, except in case the King of Spain should refuse the conditions necessary for securing it. The prince would have more power by joining with the States than in opposing them. Count Lewis expressed sympathy with these views, but feared that Maurice would prefer that the ratification should not be accepted until the states of the separate provinces had been heard; feeling convinced that several of those bodies would reject that instrument on account of the clause relating to religion.

Jeannin replied that such a course would introduce great discord into the provinces, to the profit of the enemy, and that the King of France himself—so far from being likely to wish the ratification rejected because of the clause—would never favour the rupture of negotiations if it came on account of religion. He had always instructed them to use their efforts to prevent any division among the States, as sure to lead to their ruin. He would certainly desire the same stipulation as the one made by the King of Spain, and would support rather than oppose the demand thus made, in order to content the Catholics. To be sure, he would prefer that the States should wisely make this provision of their own accord rather than on the requisition of Spain, but a rupture of the pending negotiations from the cause suggested would be painful to him and very damaging to his character at Rome.

On the 2nd November the States-General gave their formal answer to the commissioners, in regard to the ratification.

That instrument, they observed, not only did not agree with the form as promised by the archdukes in language and style, but also in regard to the seal, and to the insertion and omission of several words. On this account, and especially by reason of the concluding clause, there might be inferred the annulment of the solemn promise made in the body of the instrument. The said king and archdukes knew very well that these States-General of free countries and provinces, over which the king and archdukes pretended to no authority, were competent to maintain order in all things regarding the good constitution and government of their land and its inhabitants. On this subject, nothing could be pretended or proposed on the part of the king and archdukes without, violation of formal and solemn promises.

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“Nevertheless,” continued the States-General, “in order not to retard a good work, already begun, for the purpose of bringing the United Provinces out of a long and bloody war into a Christian and assured peace, the letters of ratification will be received in respect that they contain the declaration, on part of both the king and the archdukes, that they will treat for a peace or a truce of many years with the States-General of the United Provinces, in quality of, and as holding them to be, free countries, provinces, and states, over which they make no pretensions.”

It was further intimated, however, that the ratification was only received for reference to the estates of each of the provinces, and it was promised that, within six weeks, the commissioners should be informed whether the provinces would consent or refuse to treat. It was moreover declared that, neither at that moment nor at any future time, could any point in the letters of ratification be accepted which, directly or indirectly, might be interpreted as against that essential declaration and promise in regard to the freedom of the provinces. In case the decision should be taken to enter into negotiation upon the basis of that ratification, or any other that might meantime arrive from Spain, then firm confidence was expressed by the States that, neither on the part of the king nor that of the archdukes would there be proposed or pretended, in contravention of that promise, any point touching the good constitution, welfare, state, or government of the United Provinces, and of the inhabitants. The hope was furthermore expressed that, within ten days after the reception of the consent of the States to treat, commissioners would be sent by the archdukes to the Hague, fully authorised and instructed to declare, roundly their intentions, in order to make short work of the whole business. In that case, the States would duly authorize and instruct commissioners to act in their behalf.

Thus in the answer especial warning was given against any possible attempt to interfere with the religious question. The phraseology could not be mistaken.

At this stage of the proceedings, the States demanded that the original instrument of ratification should be deposited with them. The two commissioners declared that they were without power to consent to this. Hereupon the Assembly became violent, and many members denounced the refusal as equivalent to breaking off the negotiations. Everything indicated, so it was urged, a desire on the Spanish side to spin delays out of delays, and, meantime, to invent daily some new trap for deception. Such was the vehemence upon this point that the industrious Franciscan posted back to Brussels, and returned with the archduke's permission to deliver the document. Three conditions, however, were laid down. The States must give a receipt for the ratification. They must say in that receipt that the archdukes, in obtaining the paper from Spain, had fulfilled their original promise. If peace should not be made, they were to return the document.

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When these conditions were announced, the indignation of the republican Government at the trifling of their opponents was fiercer than ever. The discrepancies between the form prescribed and the ratification obtained had always been very difficult of digestion, but, although willing to pass them by, the States stoutly refused to accept the document on these conditions.

Tooth and nail Verreyken and Neyen fought out the contest and were worsted. Once more the nimble friar sped back and forth between the Hague and his employer's palace, and at last, after tremendous discussions in cabinet council, the conditions were abandoned.

"Nobody can decide," says the Jesuit historian, "which was greater—the obstinacy of the federal Government in screwing out of the opposite party everything it deemed necessary, or the indulgence of the archdukes in making every possible concession."

Had these solemn tricksters of an antiquated school perceived that, in dealing with men who meant what they said and said what they meant, all these little dilatory devices were superfluous, perhaps the wholesome result might have sooner been reached. In a contest of diplomacy against time it generally happens that time is the winner, and on this occasion, time and the republic were fighting on the same side.

On the 13th December the States-General re-assembled at the Hague, the separate provinces having in the interval given fresh instructions to their representatives. It was now decided that no treaty should be made, unless the freedom of the commonwealth was recognized in phraseology which, after consultation with the foreign ambassadors, should be deemed satisfactory. Farther it was agreed that, neither in ecclesiastical nor secular matters, should any conditions be accepted which could be detrimental to freedom. In case the enemy should strive for the contrary, the world would be convinced that he alone was responsible for the failure of the peace negotiations. Then, with the support of other powers friendly to the republic, hostilities could be resumed in such a manner as to ensure a favourable issue for an upright cause.

The armistice, begun on the 4th of May, was running to an end, and it was now renewed at the instance of the States. That Government, moreover, on the 23rd December formally notified to the archdukes that, trusting to their declarations, and to the statements of Neyen and Verreyken, it was willing to hold conferences for peace. Their Highnesses were accordingly invited to appoint seven or eight commissioners at once, on the same terms as formally indicated.

The original understanding had been that no envoys but Netherlanders should come from Brussels for these negotiations.

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Barneveld and the peace party, however, were desirous that Spinola, who was known to be friendly to a pacific result, should be permitted to form part of the mission. Accordingly the letters, publicly drawn up in the Assembly, adhered to the original arrangement, but Barneveld, with the privity of other leading personages, although without the knowledge of Maurice, Lewis William, and the State-Council, secretly enclosed a little note in the principal despatch to Neyen and Verreyken. In this billet it was intimated that, notwithstanding the prohibition in regard to foreigners, the States were willing—it having been proposed that one or two who were not Netherlanders should be sent—that a single Spaniard, provided he were not one of the principal military commanders, should make part of the embassy.

The phraseology had a double meaning. Spinola was certainly the chief military commander, but he was not a Spaniard. This eminent personage might be supposed to have thus received permission to come to the Netherlands, despite all that had been urged by the war-party against the danger incurred, in case of a renewal of hostilities, by admitting so clear-sighted an enemy into the heart of the republic. Moreover, the terms of the secret note would authorize the appointment of another foreigner—even a Spaniard—while the crafty president Richardot might creep into the commission, on the ground that, being a Burgundian, he might fairly call himself a Netherlander.

And all this happened.

Thus, after a whole year of parley, in which the States-General had held firmly to their original position, while the Spanish Government had crept up inch by inch, and through countless windings and subterfuges, to the point on which they might have all stood together at first, and thus have saved a twelvemonth, it was finally settled that peace conferences should begin.

Barneveld had carried the day. Maurice and his cousin Lewis William had uniformly, deliberately, but not factiously, used all their influence against any negotiations. The prince had all along loudly expressed his conviction that neither the archdukes nor Spain would ever be brought to an honourable peace. The most to be expected of them was a truce of twelve or fifteen years, to which his consent at least should never be given, and during which cessation of hostilities, should it be accorded, every imaginable effort would be made to regain by intrigue what the king had lost by the sword. As for the King of England and his counsellors, Maurice always denounced them as more Spanish than Spaniards, as doing their best to put themselves on the most intimate terms with his Catholic Majesty, and as secretly desirous—insane policy as it seemed—of forcing the Netherlands back again under the sceptre of that monarch.

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He had at first been supported in his position by the French ambassadors, who had felt or affected disinclination for peace, but who had subsequently, thrown the whole of their own and their master's influence on the side of Barneveld. They had done their best—and from time to time they had been successful—to effect at least a superficial reconciliation between those two influential personages. They had employed all the arguments at their disposal to bring the prince over to the peace party. Especially they had made use of the 'argumentum ad crumenam,' which that veteran broker in politics, Jeannin, had found so effective in times past with the great lords of the League. But Maurice showed himself so proof against the golden inducements suggested by the President that he and his king both arrived at the conclusion that there were secret motives at work, and that Maurice was not dazzled by the brilliant prospects held out to him by Henry, only because his eyes were stedfastly fixed upon some unknown but splendid advantage, to be gained through other combinations. It was naturally difficult for Henry to imagine the possibility of a man, playing a first part in the world's theatre, being influenced by so weak a motive as conviction.

Lewis William too—that "grave and wise young man," as Lord Leicester used to call him twenty years before—remained steadily on the side of the prince. Both in private conversation and in long speeches to the States-General, he maintained that the Spanish court was incapable of sincere negotiations with the commonwealth, that to break faith with heretics and rebels would always prove the foundation of its whole policy, and that to deceive them by pretences of a truce or a treaty, and to triumph afterwards over the results of its fraud, was to be expected as a matter of course.

Sooner would the face of nature be changed than the cardinal maxim of Catholic statesmanship be abandoned.

But the influence of the Nassaus, of the province of Zeeland, of the clergy, and of the war-party in general, had been overbalanced by Barneveld and the city corporations, aided by the strenuous exertions of the French ambassadors.

The decision of the States-General was received with sincere joy at Brussels. The archdukes had something to hope from peace, and little but disaster and ruin to themselves from a continuance of the war. Spinola too was unaffectedly in favour of negotiations. He took the ground that the foreign enemies of Spain, as well as her pretended friends, agreed in wishing her to go on with the war, and that this ought to open her eyes as to the expediency of peace. While there was a general satisfaction in Europe that the steady exhaustion of her strength in this eternal contest made her daily less and less formidable to other nations, there were on the other hand puerile complaints at court that the conditions prescribed by impious and insolent rebels to their sovereign were derogatory

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to the dignity of monarchy. The spectacle of Spain sending ambassadors to the Hague to treat for peace, on the basis of Netherland independence, would be a humiliation such as had never been exhibited before. That the haughty confederation should be allowed thus to accomplish its ends, to trample down all resistance to its dictation, and to defy the whole world by its insults to the Church and to the sacred principle, of monarchy, was most galling to Spanish pride. Spinola, as a son of Italy, and not inspired by the fervent hatred to Protestantism which was indigenous to the other peninsula, steadily resisted those arguments. None knew better than he the sternness of the stuff out of which that republic was made, and he felt that now or never was the time to treat, even as, five years before, 'jam ant nunquam' had been inscribed on his banner outside Ostend. But he protested that his friends gave him even harder work than his enemies had ever done, and he stoutly maintained that a peace against which all the rivals of Spain seemed to have conspired from fear of seeing her tranquil and disembarassed, must be advantageous to Spain. The genial and quick-wined Genoese could not see and hear all the secret letters and private conversations of Henry and James and their ambassadors, and he may be pardoned for supposing that, notwithstanding all the crooked and incomprehensible politics of Greenwich and Paris, the serious object of both England and France was to prolong the war. In his most private correspondence he expressed great doubts as to a favourable issue to the pending conferences, but avowed his determination that if they should fail it would be from no want of earnest effort on his part to make them succeed. It should never be said that he preferred his own private advantage to the duty of serving the best interests of the crown.

Meantime the India trade, which was to form the great bone of contention in the impending conferences, had not been practically neglected of late by the enterprising Hollanders. Peter Verhoeff, fresh from the victory of Gibraltar, towards which he had personally so much contributed by the splendid manner in which he had handled the *AEolus* after the death of Admiral Heemskerk, was placed in command of a fleet to the East Indies, which was to sail early in the spring.

Admiral Matelieff, who had been cruising in those seas during the three years past, was now on his way home. His exploits had been worthy the growing fame of the republican navy. In the summer of 1606 he had laid siege to the town and fortress of Malacca, constructed by the Portuguese at the southmost extremity of the Malay peninsula. Andreas Hurtado de Mendoza commanded the position, with a force of three thousand men, among whom were many Indians. The King or Sultan of Johore, at the south-eastern extremity of the peninsula, remained faithful to his Dutch allies, and accepted the proposition of Matelieff to take part in the hostilities now begun. The

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admiral's fleet consisted of eleven small ships, with fourteen hundred men. It was not exactly a military expedition. To the sailors of each ship were assigned certain shares of the general profits, and as it was obvious that more money was likely to be gained by trade with the natives, or by the capture of such stray carracks and other, merchantmen of the enemy as were frequently to be met in these regions, the men were not particularly eager to take part in sieges of towns or battles with cruisers. Matelieff, however, had sufficient influence over his comrades to inflame their zeal on this occasion for the fame of the republic, and to induce them to give the Indian princes and the native soldiery a lesson in Batavian warfare.

A landing was effected on the peninsula, the sailors and guns were disembarked, and an imposing auxiliary force, sent, according to promise, after much delay, by the Sultan of Johore, proceeded to invest Malacca. The ground proved wet, swampy, and impracticable for trenches, galleries, covered ways, and all the other machinery of a regular siege. Matelieff was not a soldier nor a naval commander by profession, but a merchant-skipper, like so many other heroes whose achievements were to be the permanent glory of their fatherland. He would not, however, have been a Netherlander had he not learned something of the science which Prince Maurice had so long been teaching, not only to his own countrymen but to the whole world. So moveable turrets, constructed of the spice-trees which grew in rank luxuriance all around, were filled with earth and stones, and advanced towards the fort. Had the natives been as docile to learn as the Hollanders were eager to teach a few easy lessons in the military art, the doom of Andreas Hurtado de Mendoza would have been sealed. But the great truths which those youthful pedants, Maurice and Lewis William, had extracted twenty years before from the works of the Emperor Leo and earlier pagans, amid the jeers of veterans, were not easy to transplant to the Malayan peninsula.

It soon proved that those white-turbaned, loose-garmented, supple jointed, highly-picturesque troops of the sultan were not likely to distinguish themselves for anything but wonderful rapidity in retreat. Not only did they shrink from any advance towards the distant forts, but they were incapable of abiding an attack within or behind their towers, and, at every random shot from the enemy's works, they threw down their arms and fled from their stations in dismay. It was obvious enough that the conquest and subjugation of such feeble warriors by the Portuguese and Spaniards were hardly to be considered brilliant national trophies. They had fallen an easy prey to the first European invader. They had no discipline, no obedience, no courage; and Matelieff soon found that to attempt a scientific siege with such auxiliaries against a well-constructed stone fortress, garrisoned with three thousand troops, under an experienced Spanish soldier, was but midsummer madness.

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Fevers and horrible malaria, bred by the blazing sun of the equator out of those pestilential jungles, poisoned the atmosphere. His handful of troops, amounting to not much more than a hundred men to each of his ships, might melt away before his eyes. Nevertheless, although it was impossible for him to carry the place by regular approach, he would not abandon the hope of reducing it by famine. During four months long, accordingly, he kept every avenue by land or sea securely invested. In August, however, the Spanish viceroy of India, Don Alphonso de Castro, made his appearance on the scene. Coming from Goa with a splendid fleet, numbering fourteen great galleons, four galleys, and sixteen smaller vessels, manned by three thousand seven hundred Portuguese and other Europeans, and an equal number of native troops, he had at first directed his course towards Atchen, on the north-west point of Sumatra. Here, with the magnificent arrogance which Spanish and Portuguese viceroys were accustomed to manifest towards the natives of either India, he summoned the king to surrender his strongholds, to assist in constructing a fortress for the use of his conquerors, to deliver up all the Netherlanders within his domains, and to pay the expenses of the expedition which had thus been sent to chastise him. But the King of Atchen had not sent ambassadors into the camp of Prince Maurice before the city of Grave in vain. He had learned that there were other white skins besides the Spaniards at the antipodes, and that the republic whose achievements in arts and arms were conspicuous trophies of Western civilization, was not, as it had been represented to him, a mere nest of pirates. He had learned to prefer an alliance with Holland to slavery under Spain. Moreover, he had Dutch engineers and architects in his service, and a well-constructed system of Dutch fortifications around his capital. To the summons to surrender himself and his allies he returned a defiant answer. The viceroy ordered an attack upon the city. One fort was taken. From before the next he was repulsed with great loss. The Sumatrans had derived more profit from intercourse with Europeans than the inhabitants of Johore or the Moluccas had done. De Castro abandoned the siege. He had received intelligence of the dangerous situation of Malacca, and moved down upon the place with his whole fleet. Admiral Matelieff, apprised by scouts of his approach, behaved with the readiness and coolness of a veteran campaigner. Before De Castro could arrive in the roadstead of Malacca, he had withdrawn all his troops from their positions, got all his artillery reshipped, and was standing out in the straits, awaiting the enemy.

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On the 17th August, the two fleets, so vastly disproportionate in number, size, equipment, and military force—eighteen galleons and galleys, with four or five thousand fighting men, against eleven small vessels and twelve or fourteen hundred sailors—met in that narrow sea. The action lasted all day. It was neither spirited nor sanguinary. It ought to have been within the power of the Spaniard to crush his diminutive adversary. It might have seemed a sufficient triumph for Matelieff to manoeuvre himself out of harm's way. No vessel on either side was boarded, not one surrendered, but two on each side were set on fire and destroyed. Eight of the Dutchmen were killed—not a very sanguinary result after a day's encounter with so imposing an armada. De Castro's losses were much greater, but still the battle was an insignificant one, and neither fleet gained a victory. Night put an end to the cannonading, and the Spaniards withdrew to Malacca, while Matelieff bore away to Johore. The siege of Malacca was relieved, and the Netherlanders now occupied themselves with the defence of the feeble sovereign at the other point of the peninsula.

Matelieff lay at Johore a month, repairing damages and laying in supplies. While still at the place, he received information that a large part of the Spanish armada had sailed from Malacca. Several of his own crew, who had lost their shares in the adventure by the burning of the ships to which they belonged in the action of 17th August, were reluctant and almost mutinous when their admiral now proposed to them a sudden assault on the portion of the Spanish fleet still remaining within reach. They had not come forth for barren glory, many protested, but in search of fortune; they were not elated by the meagre result of the expedition. Matelieff succeeded, however, at last in inspiring all the men of his command with an enthusiasm superior to sordid appeals, and made a few malcontents. On the 21st September, he sailed to Malacca, and late in the afternoon again attacked the Spaniards. Their fleet consisted of seven great galleons and three galleys lying in a circle before the town. The outermost ship, called the St. Nicholas, was boarded by men from three of the Dutch galleots with sudden and irresistible fury. There was a brief but most terrible action, the Netherlanders seeming endowed with superhuman vigour. So great was the panic that there was hardly an effort at defence, and within less than an hour nearly every Spaniard on board the St. Nicholas had been put to the sword. The rest of the armada engaged the Dutch fleet with spirit, but one of the great galleons was soon set on fire and burned to the water's edge. Another, dismasted and crippled, struck her flag, and all that remained would probably have been surrendered or destroyed had not the sudden darkness of a tropical nightfall put an end to the combat at set of sun. Next morning another galleon, in a shattered and sinking condition,

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was taken possession of and found filled with dead and dying. The rest of the Spanish ships made their escape into the harbour of Malacca. Matelieff stood off and on in the straits for a day or two, hesitating for fear of shallows to follow into the roadstead. Before he could take a decision, he had the satisfaction of seeing the enemy, panic-struck, save him any further trouble. Not waiting for another attack, the Spaniards set fire to every one of their ships, and retired into their fortress, while Matelieff and his men enjoyed the great conflagration as idle spectators. Thus the enterprising Dutch admiral had destroyed ten great war-ships of the enemy, and, strange to relate, had scarcely lost one man of his whole squadron. Rarely had a more complete triumph been achieved on the water than in this battle in the straits of Malacca. Matelieff had gained much glory but very little booty. He was also encumbered with a great number of prisoners.

These he sent to Don Alphonso, exchanging them for a very few Netherlands then in Spanish hands, at the rate of two hundred Spaniards for ten Dutchmen—thus showing that he held either the enemy very cheap, or his own countrymen very dear. The captured ships he burned as useless to him, but retained twenty-four pieces of artillery.

It was known to Matelieff that the Spanish viceroy had received instructions to inflict chastisement on all the oriental potentates and their subjects who had presumed of late to trade and to form alliances with the Netherlands. Johore, Achem, Paham, Patane, Amboyna, and Bantam, were the most probable points of attack. Johore had now been effectually defended, Achem had protected itself. The Dutch fleet proceeded at first to Bantams for refreshment, and from this point Matelieff sent three of his ships back to Holland. With the six remaining to him, he sailed for the Moluccas, having heard of various changes which had taken place in that important archipelago. Pausing at the great emporium of nutmegs and all-spice, Amboyna, he took measures for strengthening the fortifications of the place, which was well governed by Frederick Houtman, and then proceeded to Ternate and Tidor.

During the absence of the Netherlands, after the events on those islands recorded in a previous chapter, the Spaniards had swept down upon them from the Philippines with a fleet of thirty-seven ships, and had taken captive the Sultan of Ternate; while the potentate of Tidor, who had been left by Stephen van der Hagen in possession of his territories on condition of fidelity to the Dutch, was easily induced to throw aside the mask, and to renew his servitude to Spain. Thus both the coveted clove-islands had relapsed into the control of the enemy. Matelieff found it dangerous, on account of quicksands and shallows, to land on Tydore, but he took very energetic measures to recover possession of Ternate. On the southern side of the island, the Spaniards had built a fort and

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a town. The Dutch admiral disembarked upon the northern side, and, with assistance of the natives, succeeded in throwing up substantial fortifications at a village called Malaya. The son of the former sultan, who was a Spanish prisoner at the Philippines, was now formally inducted into his father's sovereignty, and Matelieff established at Malaya for his protection a garrison of forty-five Hollanders and a navy of four small yachts. Such were the slender means with which Oriental empires were founded in those days by the stout-hearted adventurers of the little Batavian republic.

With this miniature army and navy, and by means of his alliance with the distant commonwealth, of whose power this handful of men was a symbol, the King of Ternate was thenceforth to hold his own against the rival potentate on the other island, supported by the Spanish king. The same convention of commerce and amity was made with the Ternatians as the one which Stephen van der Hagen had formerly concluded with the Bandians; and it was agreed that the potentate should be included in any treaty of peace that might be made between the republic and Spain.

Matelieff, with three ships and a cutter, now sailed for China, but lost his time in endeavouring to open trade with the Celestial empire. The dilatory mandarins drove him at last out of all patience, and, on turning his prows once more southward, he had nearly brought his long expedition to a disastrous termination. Six well-armed, well-equipped Portuguese galleons sailed out of Macao to assail him. It was not Matelieff's instinct to turn his back on a foe, however formidable, but on this occasion discretion conquered instinct. His three ships were out of repair; he had a deficiency of powder; he was in every respect unprepared for a combat; and he reflected upon the unfavourable impression which would be made on the Chinese mind should the Hollanders, upon their first appearance in the flowery regions, be vanquished by the Portuguese. He avoided an encounter, therefore, and, by skilful seamanship, eluded all attempts of the foe at pursuit. Returning to Ternate, he had the satisfaction to find that during his absence the doughty little garrison of Malaya had triumphantly defeated the Spaniards in an assault on the fortifications of the little town. On the other hand, the King of Johore, panic-struck on the departure of his Dutch protectors, had burned his own capital, and had betaken himself with all his court into the jungle.

Commending the one and rebuking the other potentate, the admiral provided assistance for both, some Dutch trading vessels having meantime arrived in the archipelago. Matelieff now set sail for Holland, taking with him some ambassadors from the King of Siam and five ships well laden with spice. On his return he read a report of his adventures to the States-General, and received the warm commendations of their High Mightinesses. Before his departure from the tropics, Paul van Kaarden, with eight warships, had reached Bantam. On his arrival in Holland the fleet of Peter ver Hoef was busily fitting out for another great expedition to the East. This was the nation which Spanish courtiers thought to exclude for ever from commerce with India and America,

because the Pope a century before had divided half the globe between Ferdinand the Catholic and Emmanuel the Fortunate.

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It may be supposed that the results of Matelieff's voyage were likely to influence the pending negotiations for peace.

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A sovereign remedy for the disease of liberty
All the ministers and great functionaries received presents
Because he had been successful (hated)
But the habit of dissimulation was inveterate
By turns, we all govern and are governed
Contempt for treaties however solemnly ratified
Despised those who were grateful
Idiotic principle of sumptuary legislation
Indulging them frequently with oracular advice
Justified themselves in a solemn consumption of time
Man who cannot dissemble is unfit to reign
Men fought as if war was the normal condition of humanity
Men who meant what they said and said what they meant
Negotiated as if they were all immortal
Philip of Macedon, who considered no city impregnable
To negotiate was to bribe right and left, and at every step
Unwise impatience for peace

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