

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1608a eBook

History of the United Netherlands from the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce, 1608a 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. 81

History of the United Netherlands, 1608(a)

CHAPTER L.

Movements of the Emperor Rudolph—Marquis Spinola's reception at the Hague—Meeting of Spinola and Prince Maurice—Treaty of the Republic with the French Government—The Spanish commissioners before the States-General—Beginning of negotiations—Stormy discussions—Real object of Spain in the negotiations—Question of the India trade—Abandonment of the peace project—Negotiations for a truce—Prolongation of the armistice—Further delays—Treaty of the States with England—Proposals of the Spanish ambassadors to Henry of France and to James of England—Friar Neyen at the court of Spain—Spanish procrastination—Decision of Philip on the conditions of peace—Further conference at the Hague—Answer of the States-General to the proposals of the Spanish Government—General rupture.



Towards the close of the year 1607 a very feeble demonstration was made in the direction of the Dutch republic by the very feeble Emperor of Germany. Rudolph, awaking as it might be from a trance, or descending for a moment from his star-gazing tower and his astrological pursuits to observe the movements of political spheres, suddenly discovered that the Netherlands were no longer revolving in their preordained orbit. Those provinces had been supposed to form part of one great system, deriving light and heat from the central imperial sun. It was time therefore to put an end to these perturbations. The emperor accordingly, as if he had not enough on his hands at that precise moment with the Hungarians, Transylvanians, Bohemian protestants, his brother Matthias and the Grand Turk, addressed a letter to the States of Holland, Zeeland, and the provinces confederated with them.



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Reminding them of the care ever taken by himself and his father to hear all their petitions, and to obtain for them a good peace, he observed that he had just heard of their contemplated negotiations with King Philip and Archduke Albert, and of their desire to be declared free states and peoples. He was amazed, he said, that they should not have given him notice of so important an affair, inasmuch as all the United Provinces belonged to and were fiefs of the holy Roman Empire. They were warned, therefore, to undertake nothing that might be opposed to the feudal law except with his full knowledge. This letter was dated the 9th of October. The States took time to deliberate, and returned no answer until after the new year.

On the 2nd of January, 1608, they informed the emperor that they could never have guessed of his requiring notification as to the approaching conferences. They had not imagined that the archduke would keep them a secret from his brother, or the king from his uncle-cousin. Otherwise, the States would have sent due notice to his Majesty. They well remembered, they said, the appeals made by the provinces to the emperor from time to time, at the imperial diets, for help against the tyranny of the Spaniards. They well remembered, too, that no help was ever given them in response to those appeals. They had not forgotten either the famous Cologne negotiations for peace in presence of the imperial envoys, in consequence of which the enemy had carried on war against them with greater ferocity than before. At that epoch they had made use of an extreme remedy for an intolerable evil, and had solemnly renounced allegiance to the king. Since that epoch a whole generation of mankind had passed away, and many kings and potentates had recognised their freedom, obtained for just cause and maintained by the armed hand. After a long and bloody war, Albert and Philip had at last been brought to acknowledge the provinces as free countries over which they pretended to no right, as might be seen by the letters of both, copies of which were forwarded to the emperor. Full confidence was now expressed, therefore, that the emperor and all Germany would look with favour on such a God-fearing transaction, by which an end would be put to so terrible a war. Thus the States-General; replying with gentle scorn to the antiquated claim of sovereignty on the part of imperial majesty. Duly authenticated by citations of investitures, indulgences, and concordates, engrossed on yellowest parchment, sealed with reddest sealing-wax, and reposing in a thousand pigeon-holes in mustiest archives, no claim could be more solemn or stately. Unfortunately, however, rebel pikes and matchlocks, during the past forty years, had made too many rents in those sacred parchments to leave much hope of their ever being pieced handsomely together again. As to the historical theory of imperial enfeoffment, the States thought it more delicate to glide smoothly and silently over the whole matter. It would have been base to acknowledge and impolite to refute the claim.



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It is as well to imitate this reserve. It is enough simply to remind the reader that although so late as the time of Charles V., the provinces had been declared constituent parts of the empire, liable to its burthens, and entitled to its protection; the Netherlanders being practical people, and deeming burthens and protection correlative, had declined the burthen because always deprived of the protection.

And now, after a year spent in clearing away the mountains of dust which impeded the pathway to peace, and which one honest vigorous human breath might at once have blown into space, the envoys of the archduke set forth towards the Hague.

Marquis Spinola, Don Juan de Mancidor, private secretary to the King of Spain, President Richardot, Auditor Verreyken, and Brother John Neyen— a Genoese, a Spaniard, a Burgundian, a Fleming, and a Franciscan friar —travelling in great state, with a long train of carriages, horses, lackeys, cooks, and secretaries, by way of Breda, Bergen-op-Zoom,

Dort, Rotterdam, and Delft, and being received in each town and village through which they passed with great demonstrations of respect and cordial welcome, arrived at last within a mile of the Hague.

It was the dead of winter, and of the severest winter that had occurred for many years. Every river, estuary, canal was frozen hard. All Holland was one broad level sheet of ice, over which the journey had been made in sledges. On the last day of January Prince Maurice, accompanied by Lewes William, and by eight state coaches filled with distinguished personages, left the Hague and halted at the Hoorn bridge, about midway between Ryswyk and the capital. The prince had replied to the first request of the States that he should go forward to meet Spinola, by saying that he would do so willingly if it were to give him battle; otherwise not. Olden-Barneveld urged upon him however that, as servant of the republic, he was bound to do what the States commanded, as a matter involving the dignity of the nation. In consequence of this remonstrance Maurice consented to go, but he went unwillingly. The advancing procession of the Spanish ambassadors was already in sight. Far and wide in whatever direction the eye could sweep, the white surface of the landscape was blackened with human beings. It seemed as if the whole population of the Netherlands had assembled, in mass meeting, to witness the pacific interview between those two great chieftains who had never before stood face to face except upon the battle-field.

In carriages, in donkey carts, upon horseback, in sledges, on skates, upon foot-men, women, and children, gentle and simple, Protestants, Catholics, Gomarites, Armenians, anabaptists, country squires in buff and bandaleer, city magistrates and merchants in furs and velvet, artisans, boatmen, and peasants, with their wives and daughters in well-starched ruff and tremendous head-gear—they came thronging in countless



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multitudes, those honest Hollanders, cheering and throwing up their caps in honour of the chieftain whose military genius had caused so much disaster to their country. This uproarious demonstration of welcome on the part of the multitude moved the spleen of many who were old enough to remember the horrors of Spanish warfare within their borders. "Thus unreflecting, gaping, boorish, are nearly all the common people of these provinces," said a contemporary, describing the scene, and forgetting that both high and low, according to his own account, made up the mass of spectators on that winter's day. Moreover it seems difficult to understand why the Hollanders should not have indulged a legitimate curiosity, and made a holiday on this memorable occasion. Spinola was not entering their capital in triumph, a Spanish army was not marching—as it might have done had the course of events been different—over the protective rivers and marshes of the fatherland, now changed by the exceptional cold into solid highways for invasion. On the contrary, the arrival of the great enemy within their gates, with the olive-branch instead of the sword in his hand, was a victory not for Spain but for the republic. It was known throughout the land that he was commissioned by the king and the archdukes to treat for peace with the States-General of the United Provinces as with the representatives of a free and independent nation, utterly beyond any foreign control.

Was not this opening of a cheerful and pacific prospect, after a half century's fight for liberty, a fair cause for rejoicing?

The Spanish commissioners arrived at the Hoorn bridge, Spinola alighted from his coach, Prince Maurice stepped forward into the road to greet him. Then the two eminent soldiers, whose names had of late been so familiar in the mouths of men, shook hands and embraced with heroic cordiality, while a mighty shout went up from the multitude around. It was a stately and dramatic spectacle, that peaceful meeting of the rival leaders in a war which had begun before either of them was born. The bystanders observed, or thought that they observed, signs of great emotion on the faces of both. It has also been recorded that each addressed the other in epigrammatic sentences of compliment. "God is my witness," Maurice was supposed to have said, "that the arrival of these honourable negotiators is most grateful to me. Time, whose daughter is truth, will show the faith to be given to my words."

"This fortunate day," replied Spinola, "has filled full the measure of my hopes and wishes, and taken from me the faculty of ever wishing for anything again. I trust in divine clemency that an opportunity may be given to show my gratitude, and to make a fit return for the humanity thus shown me by the most excellent prince that the sun shines upon."

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With this both got into the stadholder's carriage, Spinola being placed on Maurice's right hand. Their conversation during their brief drive to the capital, followed by their long retinue, and by the enthusiastic and vociferating crowd, has not been chronicled. It is also highly probable that the second-rate theatrical dialogue which the Jesuit historian, writing from Spinola's private papers, has preserved for posterity, was rather what seemed to his imagination appropriate for the occasion than a faithful shorthand report of anything really uttered. A few commonplace phrases of welcome, with a remark or two perhaps on the unexampled severity of the frost, seem more likely to have formed the substance of that brief conversation.

A couple of trumpeters of Spinola went braying through the streets of the village capital, heralding their master's approach with superfluous noise, and exciting the disgust of the quieter portion of the burghers. At last however the envoys and their train were all comfortably housed. The Marquis, President Richardot, and Secretary Mancidor, were established at a new mansion on the Vyverberg, belonging to Goswyn Menskens. The rest of the legation were lodged at the house of Wassenaer.

It soon became plain that the ways of life and the style housekeeping habitual to great officers of the Spanish crown were very different from the thrifty manners and customs of Dutch republicans. It was so long since anything like royal pomp and circumstance had been seen in their borders that the exhibition, now made, excited astonishment. It was a land where every child went to school, where almost every individual inhabitant could read and write, where even the middle classes were proficient in mathematics and the classics, and could speak two or more modern languages; where the whole nation, with but few exceptions, were producers of material or intellectual wealth, and where comparatively little of unproductive consumption prevailed. Those self-governing and self-sustaining municipalities had almost forgotten the existence of the magnificent nothings so dear to the hearts of kings.

Spinola's house was open day and night. The gorgeous plate, gigantic candelabra, mighty ewers, shields and layers of silver and gold, which decorated his tables and sideboards, amazed the gaping crowd. He dined and supped in state every day, and the public were admitted to gaze upon his banquets as if he had been a monarch. It seemed, said those homely republicans, as if "a silver christening were going on every day in his house."

There were even grave remonstrances made to the magistracy and to, the States-General against the effect of such ostentatious and immoral proceedings upon the popular mind, and suggestions that at least the doors should be shut, so that the scandal might be confined to Spinola's own household. But the republican authorities deciding, not without wisdom, that the spectacle ought to serve rather as a wholesome warning than as a contaminating example, declined any inquisitorial interference with the housekeeping of the Spanish ambassadors.



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Before the negotiations began, a treaty had been made between the republic and the French Government, by which it was stipulated that every effort should be made by both contracting parties to bring about an honourable and assured peace between the United Provinces, Spain, and the archdukes. In case of the continuance of the war, however, it was agreed that France should assist the States with ten thousand men, while in case at any time, during the continuance of the league, France should be attacked by a foreign enemy, she should receive from her ally five thousand auxiliary troops, or their equivalent in maritime assistance. This convention was thought by other powers to be so profitable to the Netherlands as to excite general uneasiness and suspicion.

The States would have gladly signed a similar agreement with England, but nothing was to be done with that Government until an old-standing dispute in regard to the cloth trade had been arranged. Middelburg had the exclusive right of deposit for the cloths imported from England. This monopoly for Zealand being naturally not very palatable to Amsterdam and other cities of Holland, the States-General had at last authorized the merchant-adventurers engaged in this traffic to deposit their goods in any city of the United Provinces. The course of trade had been to import the raw cloth from England, to dress and dye it in the Netherlands, and then to re-export it to England. Latterly, however, some dyers and clothiers emigrating from the provinces to that country, had obtained a monopoly from James for practising their art in his dominions. In consequence of this arrangement the exportation of undyed cloths had been forbidden. This prohibition had caused irritation both in the kingdom and the republic, had necessarily deranged the natural course of trade and manufacture, and had now prevented for the time any conclusion of an alliance offensive and defensive between the countries, even if political sentiment had made such a league possible. The States-General had recourse to the usual expedient by which bad legislation on one side was countervailed by equally bad legislation on the other. The exportation of undyed English cloths being forbidden by England, the importation of dyed English cloths was now prohibited by the Netherlands. The international cloth trade stopped. This embargo became at last so detestable to all parties that concession was made by the crown for a limited export of raw cloths. The concession was soon widened by custom into a general exportation, the royal Government looking through its fingers at the open infraction of its own laws, while the natural laws of trade before long re-established the old equilibrium. Meantime the ill-feeling produced by this dissension delayed any cordial political arrangement between the countries.

On the 5th of February the Spanish commissioners came for the first time before the States-General, assembled to the number of a hundred and thirty, in their palace at the Hague.

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The first meeting was merely one of mutual compliment, President Richardot, on behalf of his colleagues, expressing gratitude for the cordial welcome which had been manifested to the envoys on their journey through so many towns of the United Provinces. They had been received, he said, not as enemies with whom an almost perpetual war had been waged, but as friends, confederates, and allies. A warmer reception they could never have hoped for nor desired.

Two special commissioners were now appointed by the States-General to negotiate with the envoys. These were count Lewis William and Brederode. With these delegates at large were associated seven others, one from each province. Barneveld of course represented Holland; Maldere, Zeeland; Berk, Utrecht; Hillama, Friesland; Bloat, Overijssel; Koender van Helpen, Groningen; Cornelius Vail Gend, Gelderland.

The negotiations began at once. The archdukes had empowered the five envoys to deal in their name and in that of the King of Spain. Philip had authorized the archdukes to take this course by an instrument dated 10th January.

In this paper he called the archdukes hereditary sovereigns of the Netherlands.

It was agreed that the various points of negotiation should be taken up in regular order; but the first question of all that presented itself was whether the conferences should be for a truce or, a peace.

The secret object of Spain was for a truce of years. Thus she thought to save her dignity, to reserve her rights of re-conquest, to replenish her treasury, and to repair her military strength. Barneveld and his party, comprising a large majority of the States-General, were for peace. Prince Maurice, having done his utmost to oppose negotiations for peace, was, for still stronger reasons, determined to avoid falling into what he considered the ambush of a truce. The French ambassadors were also for peace. The Spanish envoys accordingly concealed their real designs, and all parties began discussions for the purpose of establishing a permanent peace.

This preliminary being settled, Barneveld asked the Spaniards if they had full powers to treat with the States as with a free nation, and if they recognised them as such.

“The most ample power,” was the reply; “and we are content to treat with you even if you should choose to call yourself a kingdom.”

“By what right then are the archdukes called by the king hereditary sovereigns of the Netherlands, and why do they append the seals of the seven United Provinces to this document?” asked the Advocate, taking up from the table the full power of Albert and Isabella and putting his finger on the seals.”

“By the same right,” replied President Richardot, “that the King of France calls himself King of Navarre, that the King of Great Britain calls himself King of France, that the King of Spain calls himself King of Jerusalem.”

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Nothing could be more logical, nothing more historically accurate. But those plain-spoken republicans saw no advantage in beginning a negotiation for peace on the basis of their independence by permitting the archduke to call himself their sovereign, and to seal solemn state papers with their signet. It might seem picturesque to genealogical minds, it might be soothing to royal vanity, that paste counterfeits should be substituted for vanished jewels. It would be cruelty to destroy the mock glitter without cause. But there was cause. On this occasion the sham was dangerous. James Stuart might call himself King of France. He was not more likely to take practical possession of that kingdom than of the mountains in the moon. Henry of Bourbon was not at present contemplating an invasion of the hereditary possessions of the house of Albret. It was a matter of indifference to the Netherlands whether Philip III. were crowned in Jerusalem that very day, or the week afterwards, or never. It was very important however that the United Provinces should have it thoroughly recognised that they were a free and independent republic, nor could that recognition be complete so long as any human being in the whole world called himself their master, and signed with their seals of state. "Tis absurd," said the Hollanders, "to use the names and arms of our provinces. We have as yet no precedent to prove that you consider the United Provinces as lost, and name and arms to be but wind." Barneveld reminded them that they had all expressed the most straightforward intention, and that the father commissary especially had pledged his very soul for the sincerity of the king and the archdukes. "We ourselves never wished and never could deceive any one," continued the Advocate, "and it is also very difficult for others to deceive us."

This being the universal sentiment of the Netherlanders, it was thought proper to express it in respectful but vigorous language. This was done and the session was terminated. The Spanish envoys, knowing very well that neither the king nor the archduke regarded the retention of the titles and seals of all the seventeen Netherlands as an empty show, but that a secret and solid claim lurked beneath that usurpation, were very indignant. They however dissembled their wrath from the States' commissioners. They were unwilling that the negotiations should be broken up at the very first session, and they felt that neither Prince Maurice nor Barneveld was to be trifled with upon this point. But they were loud and magnificent in their demonstrations when they came to talk the matter over with the ambassadors of France and England. It was most portentous, they thought, to the cause of monarchy and good government all over the world, that these republicans, not content to deal with kings and princes on a footing of equality, should presume to dictate to them as to inferiors. Having passed through rebellion to liberty, they

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were now proceeding to trample upon the most hallowed customs and rites. What would become of royalty, if in the same breath it should not only renounce the substance, but even put away the symbols of authority. This insolence of the people was not more dangerous to the king and the archdukes than it was to every potentate in the universe. It was a sacred duty to resist such insults. Sage Jeannin did his best to pacify the vehemence of the commissioners. He represented to them that foreign titles borne by anointed kings were only ensigns of historical possessions which they had for ever renounced; but that it might become one day the pleasure of Spain, or lie in the power of Spain, to vindicate her ancient rights to the provinces.

Hence the anxiety of the States was but natural. The old Leaguer and political campaigner knew very well, moreover, that at least one half of Richardot's noble wrath was feigned. The commissioners would probably renounce the title and the seven seals, but in so doing would drive a hard bargain. For an empty phrase and a pennyworth of wax they would extort a heavy price. And this was what occurred. The commissioners agreed to write for fresh instructions to Brussels. A reply came in due time from the archdukes, in which they signified their willingness to abandon the title of sovereigns over all the Netherlands, and to abstain from using their signet. In exchange for this concession they merely demanded from the States-General a formal abandonment of the navigation to both the Indies. This was all. The archdukes granted liberty to the republic. The republic would renounce its commerce with more than half the world.

The scorn of the States' commissioners at this proposition can be imagined, and it became difficult indeed for them to speak on the subject in decorous language. Because the archdukes were willing to give up something which was not their property, the republic was voluntarily to open its veins and drain its very life-blood at the bidding of a foreign potentate. She was to fling away all the trophies of Heemskerk and Sebalt de Weerd, of Balthasar de Cordes, Van der Hagen, Matelieff, and Verhoeff; she was to abdicate the position which she had already acquired of mistress of the seas, and she was to deprive herself for ever of that daily increasing ocean commerce which was rapidly converting a cluster of puny, half-submerged provinces into a mighty empire. Of a certainty the Spanish court at this new epoch was an astounding anachronism. In its view Pope Alexander VI. still lived and reigned.

Liberty was not a boon conferred upon the Netherlanders by their defeated enemy. It had been gained by their own right hands; by the blood, and the gold, and the sweat of two generations. If it were the king's to give, let him try once more if he could take it away. Such were the opinions and emotions of the Dutchmen, expressed in as courteous language as they could find.

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“It would be a political heresy,” said Barneveld to the Spanish commissioners at this session, “if my lords the States should by contract banish their citizens out of two-thirds of the world, both land and sea.”

“’Tis strange,” replied the Spaniards, “that you wish to have more than other powers—kings or republics—who never make any such pretensions. The Indies, East and West, are our house, privately possessed by us for more than a hundred years, and no one has a right to come into it without our permission. This is not banishment, but a custom to which all other nations submit. We give you your sovereignty before all the world, quitting all claims upon it. We know very well that you deny receiving it from us; but to give you a quit claim, and to permit free trade besides, would be a little more than you have a right to expect.”

Was it not well for the cause of liberty, commercial intercourse, and advancement of the human intellect, that there was this obstinate little republic in the world, refusing to tolerate that to which all other great powers of the earth submitted; that there was one nation determined not to acknowledge three-quarters of the world, including America and India, as the private mansion of the King of Spain, to be locked against the rest of the human race?

The next session of the negotiators after the arrival of this communication from the archdukes was a stormy one. The India trade was the sole subject of discussion. As the States were firmly resolved never to relinquish that navigation which in truth was one of their most practical and valuable possessions, and as the royal commissioners were as solemnly determined that it should never be conceded, it may be imagined how much breath, how much foolscap paper, was wasted.

In truth, the negotiation for peace had been a vile mockery from the beginning. Spain had no real intention of abdicating her claim to the United Provinces.

At the very moment when the commissioners were categorically making that concession in Brussels, and claiming such a price for it, Hoboken, the archduke’s diplomatic representative in London, was earnestly assuring King James that neither his master nor Philip had the remotest notion of renouncing their sovereignty over all the Netherlands. What had been said and written to that effect was merely a device, he asserted, to bring about a temporary truce. During the interval of imaginary freedom it was certain that the provinces would fall into such dire confusion that it would be easier for Spain to effect their re-conquest, after a brief delay for repairing her own strength, than it would be by continuing the present war without any cessation.

The Spanish ambassador at Vienna too on his part assured the Emperor Rudolph that his master was resolved never to abdicate the sovereignty of the provinces. The negotiations then going on, he said, were simply intended to extort from the States a

renunciation of the India trade and their consent to the re-introduction of the Catholic religion throughout their territories.

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Something of all this was known and much more suspected at the Hague; the conviction therefore that no faith would be kept with rebels and heretics, whatever might be said or written, gained strength every day. That these delusive negotiations with the Hollanders were not likely to be so successful as the comedy enacted twenty years before at Bourbourg, for the amusement of Queen Elizabeth and her diplomatists while the tragedy of the Armada was preparing, might be safely prophesied. Richardot was as effective as ever in the part which he had so often played, but Spinola laboured under the disadvantage of being a far honest man than Alexander Farnese. Far from equal to that famous chieftain in the management of a great military campaign, it is certain that he was infinitely inferior to him in genteel comedy. Whether Maurice and Lewis William, Barneveld and Brederode, were to do better in the parts formerly assigned to John Rogers, Valentine Dale, Comptroller Croft, and their colleagues, remained to be seen.

On the 15th of February, at the fifth conference of the commissioners, the first pitched battle on the India trade was fought. Thereafter the combat was almost every day renewed. Exactly, as a year before, the news of Heemskerk's victory at Gibraltar had made the king and the archdukes eager to obtain an armistice with the rebels both by land and sea, so now the report of Matelieff's recent achievements in the Indian ocean was increasing their anxiety to exclude the Netherlanders from the regions which they were rapidly making their own.

As we look back upon the negotiations, after the lapse of two centuries and a half, it becomes difficult to suppress our amazement at those scenes of solemn trickery and superhuman pride. It is not necessary to follow, step by step, the proceedings at each daily conference, but it is impossible for me not to detain the reader for yet a season longer with those transactions, and especially to invite him to ponder the valuable lesson which in their entirety they convey.

No higher themes could possibly be laid before statesmen to discuss. Questions of political self-government, religious liberty, national independence, divine Right, rebellious Power, freedom of commerce, supremacy of the seas, omnipotence claimed by the old world over the destiny of what was called the new, were importunately demanding solution. All that most influenced human passion, or stirred human reason to its depths—at that memorable point of time when two great epochs seemed to be sweeping against each other in elemental conflict— was to be dealt with. The emancipated currents of human thought, the steady tide of ancient dogma, were mingling in wrath. There are times of paroxysm in which Nature seems to effect more in a moment, whether intellectually or materially, than at other periods during a lapse of years. The shock of forces, long preparing and long delayed, is apt at last to make itself sensible to those neglectful of gradual but vital changes. Yet there are always ears that are deaf to the most portentous din.

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Thus, after that half century of war, the policy of Spain was still serenely planting itself on the position occupied before the outbreak of the revolt. The commonwealth, solidly established by a free people, already one of the most energetic and thriving among governments, a recognised member of the great international family, was now gravely expected to purchase from its ancient tyrant the independence which it had long possessed, while the price demanded for the free papers was not only extravagant, but would be disgraceful to an emancipated slave. Holland was not likely at that turning point in her history, and in the world's history, to be false to herself and to the great principles of public law. It was good for the cause of humanity that the republic should reappear at that epoch. It was wholesome for Europe that there should be just then a plain self-governing people, able to speak homely and important truths. It was healthy for the moral and political atmosphere—in those days and in the time to come—that a fresh breeze from that little sea-born commonwealth should sweep away some of the ancient fog through which a few very feeble and very crooked mortals had so long loomed forth like giants and gods.

To vindicate the laws of nations and of nature; to make a noble effort for reducing to a system—conforming, at least approximately, to divine reason—the chaotic elements of war and peace; to recal the great facts that earth, sea, and sky ought to belong to mankind, and not to an accidental and very limited selection of the species was not an unworthy task for a people which had made such unexampled sacrifice for liberty and right.

Accordingly, at the conference on the 15th February, the Spanish commissioners categorically summoned the States to desist entirely from the trade to either India, exactly as before the war. To enforce this prohibition, they said, was the principal reason why Philip desired peace. To obtain their freedom was surely well worth renunciation of this traffic; the more so, because their trade with Spain, which was so much shorter and safer, was now to be re-opened. If they had been able to keep that commerce, it was suggested, they would have never talked about the Indies. The commissioners added, that this boon had not been conceded to France nor England, by the treaties of Vervins and London, and that the States therefore could not find it strange that it should be refused to them.

The States' commissioners stoutly replied that commerce was open to all the world, that trade was free by the great law of nature, and that neither France, England, nor the United Provinces, were to receive edicts on this great subject from Spain and Portugal. It was absurd to circumscribe commercial intercourse at the very moment of exchanging war for peace. To recognise the liberty of the States upon paper, and to attempt the imposition of servitude in reality, was a manifest contradiction. The ocean was free to all nations. It had not been enclosed by Spain with a rail-fence.

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The debate grew more stormy every hour. Spinola expressed great indignation that the Netherlanders should be so obstinate upon this point. The tall, spare President arose in wrath from his seat at the council-board, loudly protesting that the King of Spain would never renounce his sovereignty over the provinces until they had forsworn the India trade; and with this menace stalked out of the room.

The States' commissioners were not frightened. Barneveld was at least a match for Richardot, and it was better, after all, that the cards should be played upon the table. Subsequent meetings were quite as violent as the first, the country was agitated far and wide, the prospects of pacification dwindled to a speck in the remote horizon. Arguments at the Board of Conference, debates in the States-General, pamphlets by merchants and advocates—especially several emanating from the East India Company—handled the great topic from every point of view, and it became more and more evident that Spain could not be more resolute to prohibit than the republic to claim the trade.

It was an absolute necessity, so it was urged, for the Hollanders to resist the tyrannical dominion of the Spaniards. But this would be impossible for them, should they rely on the slender natural resources of their own land. Not a sixth part of the population could be nourished from the soil. The ocean was their inheritance, their birthright, their empire. It was necessary that Spain should understand this first, last, and always. She ought to comprehend, too, that her recognition of Dutch independence was not a gift, but the acknowledgment of a fact. Without that acknowledgment peace was impossible. If peace were to be established, it was not to be bought by either party. Each gave and each received, and certainly Spain was in no condition to dictate the terms of a sale. Peace, without freedom of commerce, would be merely war without killing, and therefore without result. The Netherlanders, who in the middle of the previous century had risen against unjust taxation and arbitrary laws, had not grown so vile as to accept from a vanquished foe what they had spurned from their prince. To be exiled from the ocean was an unimaginable position for the republic. Moreover, to retire from the Indies would be to abandon her Oriental allies, and would be a dishonour as well as a disaster. Her good faith, never yet contaminated, would be stained, were she now to desert the distant peoples and potentates with whom she had formed treaties of friendship and commerce, and hand them over to the vengeance of the Spaniards and Portuguese.

And what a trade it was which the United Provinces were thus called upon to renounce! The foreign commerce of no other nation could be compared in magnitude to that of their commonwealth. Twenty ships traded regularly to Guinea, eighty to the Cape de Verd Islands, twenty to America, and forty to the East Indies. Ten thousand sailors, who gained their living in this traffic, would be thrown out of employment, if the States should now listen to the Spanish propositions.



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It was well known too that the profits of the East India Company had vastly increased of late, and were augmenting with every year. The trade with Cambay, Malabar, Ceylon, Koromandel, and Queda, had scarcely begun, yet was already most promising. Should the Hollanders only obtain a footing in China, they felt confident of making their way through the South Seas and across the pole to India. Thus the search for a great commercial highway between Cathay, Europe, and the New World, which had been baffled in the arctic regions, should be crowned with success at the antarctic, while it was deemed certain that there were many lands, lighted by the Southern Cross, awaiting the footsteps of the fortunate European discoverer. What was a coasting-trade with Spain compared with this boundless career of adventure? Now that the world's commerce, since the discovery of America and the passage around the Cape of Good Hope, had become oceanic and universal, was the nation which took the lead on blue water to go back to the creeping land-locked navigation of the ancient Greeks and Phoenicians? If the East India Company, in whose womb was empire, were now destroyed, it would perish with its offspring for ever. There would be no regeneration at a future day. The Company's ships too were a navy in themselves, as apt for war as for trade. This the Spaniards and Portuguese had already learned to their cost. The merchant-traders to Spain would be always in the power of Spain, and at any favourable moment might be seized by Spain. The Spanish monopoly in the East and West was the great source of Spanish power, the chief cause of the contempt with which the Spanish monarchy looked down upon other nations. Let those widely expanded wings be clipped, and Spain would fall from her dizzy height. To know what the States ought to refuse the enemy, it was only necessary to observe what he strenuously demanded, to ponder the avowed reason why he desired peace. The enemy was doing his best to damage the commonwealth; the States were merely anxious to prevent injury to themselves and to all the world; to vindicate for themselves, and for all men, the common use of ocean, land, and sky.

A nation which strove to shut up the seas, and to acquire a monopoly of the world's trade, was a pirate, an enemy of mankind. She was as deserving of censure as those who created universal misery in time of famine, by buying up all the corn in order to enrich themselves. According to the principles of the ancients, it was legitimate to make war upon such States as closed their own ports to foreign intercourse. Still more just was it, therefore, to carry arms against a nation which closed the ports of other people.

The dispute about the India navigation could be settled in a moment, if Spain would but keep her word. She had acknowledged the great fact of independence, which could not be gainsaid. Let each party to the negotiation, therefore keep that which it already possessed. Let neither attempt to prescribe to the other—both being free and independent States—any regulations about interior or foreign trade.



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Thus reasoned the States-General, the East India directors, the great majority of the population of the provinces, upon one great topic of discussion. A small minority only attempted to defend the policy of renouncing the India trade as a branch of industry, in which a certain class, and that only in the maritime provinces, was interested. It is certainly no slight indication of the liberty of thought, of speech, and of the press, enjoyed at that epoch in the Netherlands and nowhere else to anything like the same extent—that such opinions, on a subject deemed vital to the very existence of the republic, were freely published and listened to with toleration, if not with respect. Even the enlightened mind of Grotius was troubled with terrors as to the effect on the public mind at this crisis of anonymous pamphlets concerning political affairs. But in this regard it must be admitted that Grotius was not in advance of his age, although fully conceding that press-laws were inconsistent with human liberty.

Maurice and Barneveld were equally strenuous in maintaining the India trade; the prince, because he hoped that resistance to Spain upon this point would cause the negotiations to be broken off, the Advocate in the belief that firmness on the part of the States would induce the royal commissioners to yield.

The States-General were not likely to be deficient in firmness. They felt that the republic was exactly on the point of wresting the control of the East from the hands of the Portuguese, and they were not inclined to throw away the harvest of their previous labours just as it was ripening. Ten thousand persons at least, besides the sailors employed, were directly interested in the traffic, most of whom possessed great influence in the commonwealth, and would cause great domestic dissension should they now be sacrificed to Spain. To keep the India trade was the best guarantee for the future possession of the traffic to Spain; for the Spanish Government would never venture an embargo upon the direct intercourse between the provinces and its own dominions, for fear of vengeance in the East. On the other hand, by denouncing oceanic commerce, they would soon find themselves without a navy at all, and their peaceful coasting ships would be at the mercy of Spain or of any power possessing that maritime energy which would have been killed in the republic. By abandoning the ocean, the young commonwealth would sink into sloth, and become the just object of contempt to the world. It would cease to be an independent power, and deserve to fall a prey to any enterprising neighbour.

Even Villeroy admitted the common belief to be, that if the India trade were abandoned “the States would melt away like snow in the sun.” He would not, on that account, however, counsel to the States obstinacy upon the subject, if Spain refused peace or truce except on condition of their exclusion from the traffic. Jeannin, Villeroy, and their master; Isaac le Maire and Peter Plancius, could have told the reason why if they had chosen.



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Early in March a triple proposition was made by the States' commissioners. Spain might take her choice to make peace on the basis of free trade; to make peace, leaving everything beyond the Tropic of Cancer to the chance of war; or to make peace in regard to all other than the tropical regions, concluding for those only a truce during a definite number of years.

The Spaniards rejected decidedly two of these suggestions. Of course they would not concede freedom of the sea. They considered the mixture of peace and war a monstrous conception. They were, however, willing to favour peace for Europe and truce in the tropics, provided the States bound themselves; on the expiration of the limited period, to abandon the Indian and American trade for ever. And to this proposition the States of course were deaf. And thus they went on spinning around, day after day, in the same vicious circle, without more hope of progress than squirrels in a cage.

Barneveld, always overbearing with friend or foe, and often violent, was not disposed to make preposterous concessions, notwithstanding his eager desire for peace. "The might of the States-General," said he, "is so great, thank God, that they need not yield so much to the King of Spain as seems to be expected, nor cover themselves with dishonour."

"And do you think yourselves more mighty than the Kings of England and France?" cried Richardot in a great rage, "for they never dared to make any attempt upon the Indies, East or West."

"We are willing to leave the king in his own quarters," was the reply, "and we expect him to leave us in ours."

"You had better take a sheet of paper at once," said Richardot, "write down exactly what you wish, and order us to agree to it all without discussion."

"We demand nothing that is unreasonable in these negotiations," was the firm rejoinder, "and expect that nothing unjust will be required of us."

It was now suggested by the States' commissioners that a peace; with free navigation, might be concluded for Europe, and a truce for other parts of the world, without any stipulations as to what should take place on its termination. This was hardly anything new, but it served as a theme for more intellectual buffeting. Hard words were freely exchanged during several hours; and all parties lost their temper. At last the Spaniards left the conference-chamber in a rage. Just as they were going, Barneveld asked them whether he should make a protocol of the session for the States-General, and whether it was desirable in future to resume the discussion.



“Let every one do exactly as he likes,” replied Spinola, wrathfully, as he moved to the door.

Friar John, always plausible, whispered a few soothing words in the ear of the marquis, adding aloud, so that the commissioners might hear, “Night brings counsel.” These words he spoke in Latin.

“He who wishes to get everything is apt to lose everything,” cried, out Maldere, the Zeeland deputy, in Spanish, to the departing commissioners.



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“Take that to yourselves,” rejoined Richardot, very fiercely; “you may be sure that it will be your case.”

So ended that interview.

Directly afterwards there was a conference between the States’ commissioners and the French envoys.

Jeannin employed all his powers of argument: and persuasion to influence the Netherlanders against a rupture of the negotiations because of the India trade. It would be better to abandon that commerce, so he urged, than to give up the hope of peace. The commissioners failed to see the logic or to melt at the eloquence of his discourse. They would have been still less inclined, if that were possible, to move from their position, had they known of the secret conferences which Jeannin had just been holding with Isaac le Maire of Amsterdam, and other merchants practically familiar with the India trade. Carrying out the French king’s plan to rob the republic of that lucrative traffic, and to transplant it, by means of experienced Hollanders, into France, the president, while openly siding with the States, as their most disinterested friend, was secretly doing all in his power to destroy the very foundation of their commonwealth.

Isaac le Maire came over from Amsterdam in a mysterious manner, almost in disguise. Had his nocturnal dealings with the French minister been known, he would have been rudely dealt with by the East India Company. He was a native of Tournay, not a sincere republican therefore, was very strongly affected to France, and declared that all his former fellow-townsmen, and many more, had the fleur-de-lys stamped on their hearts. If peace should be made without stipulation in favour of the East India Company, he, with his three brothers, would do what they could to transfer that corporation to France. All the details of such a prospective arrangement were thoroughly discussed, and it was intimated that the king would be expected to take shares in the enterprise. Jeannin had also repeated conferences on the same subject with the great cosmographer Plancius. It may be well understood, therefore, that the minister of Henry IV. was not very ardent to encourage the States in their resolve to oppose peace or truce, except with concession of the India trade.

The States preferred that the negotiations should come to nought on the religious ground rather than on account of the India trade. The provinces were nearly unanimous as to the prohibition of the Catholic worship, not from bigotry for their own or hatred of other creeds, but from larger views of what was then called tolerance, and from practical regard for the necessities of the State. To permit the old worship, not from a sense of justice but as an article of bargain with a foreign power, was not only to abase the government of the States but to convert every sincere Catholic throughout the republic into a grateful adherent of Philip and the archdukes. It was deliberately to place a lever, to be used in all future time, for the overthrow of their political structure.

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In this the whole population was interested, while the India navigation, although vital to the well-being of the nation, was not yet universally recognised as so supremely important, and was declared by a narrow-minded minority to concern the provinces of Holland and Zeeland alone.

All were silently agreed, therefore, to defer the religious question to the last.

Especially, commercial greed induced the States to keep a firm clutch on the great river on which the once splendid city of Antwerp stood. Ever since that commercial metropolis had succumbed to Farnese, the republic had maintained the lower forts, by means of which, and of Flushing at the river's mouth, Antwerp was kept in a state of suspended animation. To open the navigation of the Scheld, to permit free approach to Antwerp, would, according to the narrow notions of the Amsterdam merchants, be destructive to their own flourishing trade.

In vain did Richardot, in one well-fought conference, do his best to obtain concessions on this important point. The States' commissioners were as deaf as the Spaniards had been on the India question. Richardot, no longer loud and furious, began to cry. With tears running down his cheeks, he besought the Netherlanders not to insist so strenuously upon all their points, and to remember that concessions were mutually necessary, if an amicable arrangement were to be framed. The chances for peace were promising. "Let not a blight be thrown over all our hopes," he exclaimed, "by too great pertinacity on either side. Above all, let not the States dictate terms as to a captive or conquered king, but propose such conditions as a benevolent but powerful sovereign could accept."

These adjurations might be considered admirable, if it had been possible for the royal commissioners to point to a single mustard-seed of concession ever vouchsafed by them to the republic.

Meantime the month of March had passed. Nothing had been accomplished, but it was agreed to prolong the armistice through April and May.

The negotiations having feebly dribbled off into almost absolute extinction, Friar John was once more set in motion, and despatched to Madrid. He was sent to get fresh instructions from Philip, and he promised, on departing, to return in forty days. He hoped as his reward, he said, to be made bishop of Utrecht. "That will be a little above your calibre," replied Barneveld. Forty days was easily said, and the States consented to the additional delay.

During his absence there was much tedious discussion of minor matters, such as staple rights of wine and cloths, regulations of boundaries, removal of restrictions on trade and navigation, passports, sequestered estates, and the like; all of which were subordinate to the all-important subjects of India and Religion, those two most tender topics growing



so much more tender the more they were handled as to cause at last a shiver whenever they were approached. Nevertheless both were to be dealt with, or the negotiations would fall to the ground.

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The States felt convinced that they would fall to the ground, that they had fallen to the ground, and they at least would not stoop to pick them up again.

The forty days passed away, but the friar never returned. April and May came and went, and again the armistice expired by its own limitation. The war party was disgusted with the solemn trifling, Maurice was exasperated beyond endurance, Barneveld and the peace men began to find immense difficulty in confronting the gathering storm.

The prince, with difficulty, consented to a prolongation of the armistice for two months longer; resolute to resume hostilities should no accord be made before the end of July. The Advocate, with much earnestness, and with more violence than was habitual with him, insisted on protracting the temporary truce until the end of the year. The debates in the States-General and the state-council were vehement; passion rose to fever-heat, but the stadholder, although often half beside himself with rage, ended by submitting once more to the will of Barneveld.

This was the easier, as the Advocate at last proposed an agreement which seemed to Maurice and Lewis William even better than their own original suggestion. It was arranged that the armistice should be prolonged until the end of the year, but it was at the same time stipulated that unless the negotiations had reached a definite result before the 1st of August, they should be forthwith broken off.

Thus a period of enforced calm—a kind of vacation, as if these great soldiers and grey-beards had been a troop of idle school-boys—was now established, without the slightest reason.

President Jeannin took occasion to make a journey to Paris, leaving the Hague on the 20th June.

During his absence a treaty of the States with England, similar in its terms to the one recently concluded between the republic and France, but only providing for half the number of auxiliary troops arranged for in the French convention, was signed at the Hague. The English plenipotentiaries, Vinwood and Spencer, wished to delay the exchange of signatures under the pending negotiations with Spain and the archdukes were brought to a close, as King James was most desirous at that epoch to keep on good terms with his Catholic Majesty. The States were so urgent, however, to bring at least this matter to a termination, and the English so anxious lest France should gain still greater influence than she now enjoyed in the provinces, that they at last gave way. It was further stipulated in the convention that the debt of the States to England, then amounting to L815,408 sterling, should be settled by annual payments of L60,000; to begin with the expected peace.



Besides this debt to the English Government, the States-General owed nine millions of florins (L900,000), and the separate provinces altogether eighteen millions (L1,800,000). In short, there would be a deficiency of at least three hundred thousand florins a month if the war went on, although every imaginable device had already been employed for increasing the revenue from taxation. It must be admitted therefore, that the Barneveld party were not to be severely censured for their desire to bring about an honourable peace.

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That Jeannin was well aware of the disposition prevailing throughout a great part of the commonwealth is certain. It is equally certain that he represented to his sovereign, while at Paris, that the demand upon his exchequer by the States, in case of the resumption of hostilities, would be more considerable than ever. Immense was the pressure put upon Henry by the Spanish court, during the summer, to induce him to abandon his allies. Very complicated were the nets thrown out to entangle the wary old politician in "the grey jacket and with the heart of gold," as he was fond of designating himself, into an alliance with Philip and the archdukes.

Don Pedro de Toledo, at the head of a magnificent embassy, arrived in Paris with projects of arranging single, double, or triple marriages between the respective nurseries of France and Spain. The Infanta might marry with a French prince, and have all the Netherlands for her dower, so soon as the childless archdukes should have departed this life. Or an Infante might espouse a daughter of France with the same heritage assigned to the young couple.

Such proposals, duly set forth in sonorous Spanish by the Constable of Castile, failed to produce a very soothing effect on Henry's delicate ear. He had seen and heard enough of gaining thrones by Spanish marriages. Had not the very crown on his own head, which he had won with foot in stirrup and lance in rest, been hawked about for years, appended to the wedding ring of the Spanish Infanta? It might become convenient to him at some later day, to form a family alliance with the house of Austria, although he would not excite suspicion in the United Provinces by openly accepting it then. But to wait for the shoes of Albert and Isabella, and until the Dutch republic had been absorbed into the obedient Netherlands by his assistance, was not a very flattering prospect for a son or daughter of France. The ex-Huguenot and indomitable campaigner in the field or in politics was for more drastic measures. Should the right moment come, he knew well enough how to strike, and could appropriate the provinces, obedient or disobedient, without assistance from the Spanish babies.

Don Pedro took little by his propositions. The king stoutly declared that the Netherlands were very near to his heart, and that he would never abandon them on any consideration. So near, indeed, that he meant to bring them still nearer, but this was not then suspected by the Spanish court; Henry, the while, repelling as a personal insult to himself the request that he should secretly labour to reduce the United Provinces under subjection to the archdukes. It had even been proposed that he should sign a secret convention to that effect, and there were those about the court who were not ill-disposed for such a combination. The king was, however, far too adroit to be caught in any such trap. The marriage proposals in themselves he did not dislike, but Jeannin and he were both of a mind that they should be kept entirely secret.



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Don Pedro, on the contrary, for obvious reasons, was for making the transactions ostentatiously public, and, as a guarantee of his master's good faith in regard to the heritage of the Netherlands, he proposed that every portion of the republic, thenceforth to be conquered by the allies, should be confided to hands in which Henry and the archdukes would have equal confidence.

But these artifices were too trivial to produce much effect. Henry remained true, in his way, to the States-General, and Don Pedro was much laughed at in Paris, although the public scarcely knew wherefore.

These intrigues had not been conducted so mysteriously but that Barneveld was aware of what was going on. Both before Jeannin's departure from the Hague in June, and on his return in the middle of August, he catechised him very closely on the subject. The old Leaguer was too deep, however, to be thoroughly pumped, even by so practised a hand as the Advocate's, so that more was suspected than at the time was accurately known.

As, at the memorable epoch of the accession of the King of Scots to the throne of Elizabeth, Maximilian de Bethune had flattered the new monarch with the prospect of a double marriage, so now Don Fernando Girono had been sent on solemn mission to England, in order to offer the same infants to James which Don Pedro was placing at the disposition of Henry.

The British sovereign, as secretly fascinated by the idea of a Spanish family alliance as he had ever been by the proposals of the Marquis de Rosny for the French marriages, listened with eagerness. Money was scattered as profusely among the English courtiers by Don Fernando as had been done by De Bethune four years before. The bribes were accepted, and often by the very personages who knew the colour of Bourbon money, but the ducats were scarcely earned. Girono, thus urging on the English Government the necessity of deserting the republic and cementing a cordial, personal, and political understanding between James and Philip, effected but little. It soon became thoroughly understood in England that the same bargaining was going on simultaneously in France. As it was evident that the Spanish children could not be disposed of in both markets at the same time, it was plain to the dullest comprehension that either the brokerage of Toledo or of Girono was a sham, and that a policy erected upon such flimsy foundations would soon be washed away.

It is certain, however, that James, while affecting friendship for the States, and signing with them the league of mutual assistance, was secretly longing to nibble the bait dangled before him by Girono, and was especially determined to prevent, if possible, the plans of Toledo.

Meantime, brother John Neyen was dealing with Philip and the Duke of Lerma, in Spain.



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The friar strenuously urged upon the favourite and the rest of the royal advisers the necessity of prompt action with the States. This needed not interfere with an unlimited amount of deception. It was necessary to bring the negotiations to a definite agreement. It would be by no means requisite, however, to hold to that agreement whenever a convenient opportunity for breaking it should present itself. The first object of Spanish policy, argued honest John, should be to get the weapons out of the rebels' hands. The Netherlanders ought to be encouraged to return to their usual pursuits of commerce and manufactures, whence they derived their support, and to disband their military and naval forces. Their sailors and traders should be treated kindly in Spain, instead of being indulged as heretofore with no hospitality save that of the Holy Inquisition and its dungeons. Let their minds be disarmed of all suspicion. Now the whole population of the provinces had been convinced that Spain, in affecting to treat, was secretly devising means to re-impose her ancient yoke upon their necks.

Time went by in Aranjuez and Madrid. The forty days, promised as the period of Neyen's absence, were soon gone; but what were forty days, or forty times forty, at the Spanish court? The friar, who, whatever his faults, was anything but an idler, chafed at a procrastination which seemed the more stupendous to him, coming fresh as he did from a busy people who knew the value of time. In the anguish of his soul he went to Rodrigo Calderon, of the privy council, and implored his influence with Government to procure leave for him to depart. Calderon, in urbane but decisive terms, assured him that this would be impossible before the king should return to Madrid. The monk then went to Idiaquez, who was in favour of his proceeding at once to the Netherlands, but who on being informed that Calderon was of a different opinion, gave up the point. More distressed than ever, Neyen implored Prada's assistance, but Prada plunged him into still deeper despair. His Majesty, said that counsellor, with matchless effrontery, was studying the propositions of the States-General, and all the papers in the negotiation, line by line, comma by comma. There were many animadversions to make, many counter suggestions to offer. The king was pondering the whole subject most diligently. When those lucubrations were finished, the royal decision, aided by the wisdom of the privy council, would be duly communicated to the archdukes.

To wait for an answer to the propositions of the suspicious States-General until Philip III. had mastered the subject in detail, was a prospect too dreary even for the equable soul of Brother John. Dismayed at the position in which he found himself, he did his best to ferret out the reasons for the preposterous delay; not being willing to be paid off in allusions to the royal investigations. He was still further



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appalled at last by discovering that the delay was absolutely for the delay's sake. It was considered inconsistent with the dignity of the Government not to delay. The court and cabinet had quite made up their minds as to the answer to be made to the last propositions of the rebels, but to make it known at once was entirely out of the question. In the previous year his Majesty's administration, so it was now confessed with shame, had acted with almost indecent haste. That everything had been conceded to the confederated provinces was the—common talk of Europe. Let the time-honoured, inveterate custom of Spain in grave affairs to proceed slowly, and therefore surely, be in future observed. A proper self-respect required the king to keep the universe in suspense for a still longer period upon the royal will and the decision of the royal council.

Were the affairs of the mighty Spanish empire so subordinate to the convenience of that portion of it called the Netherlands that no time was to be lost before settling their affairs?

Such dismal frivolity, such palsied pride, seems scarcely credible; but more than all this has been carefully recorded in the letters of the friar.

If it were precipitation to spend the whole year 1607 in forming a single phrase; to wit, that the archdukes and the king would treat with the United Provinces as with countries to which they made no pretensions; and to spend the best part of another year in futile efforts to recal that phrase; if all this had been recklessness and haste, then, surely, the most sluggish canal in Holland was a raging cataract, and the march of a glacier electric speed.

Midsummer had arrived. The period in which peace was to be made or abandoned altogether had passed. Jeannin had returned from his visit to Paris; the Danish envoys, sent to watch the negotiations, had left the Hague, utterly disgusted with a puppet-show, all the strings of which, they protested, were pulled from the Louvre. Brother John, exasperated by the superhuman delays, fell sick of a fever at Burgos, and was sent, on his recovery, to the court at Valladolid to be made ill again by the same cause, and still there came no sound from the Government of Spain.

At last the silence was broken. Something that was called the voice of the king reached the ears of the archduke. Long had he wrestled in prayer on this great subject, said Philip III., fervently had he besought the Omnipotent for light. He had now persuaded himself that he should not fulfil his duty to God, nor satisfy his own strong desire for maintaining the Catholic faith, nor preserve his self-respect, if he now conceded his supreme right to the Confederated Provinces at any other price than the uncontrolled exercise, within their borders, of the Catholic religion. He wished, therefore, as obedient

son of the Church and Defender of the Faith, to fulfil this primary duty, untrammelled by any human consideration, by any profit that might induce

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him towards a contrary course. That which he had on other occasions more than once signified he now confirmed. His mind was fixed; this was his last and immutable determination, that if the confederates should permit the free and public exercise of the Catholic, Roman, Apostolic religion to all such as wished to live and die in it, for this cause so grateful to God, and for no other reason, he also would permit to them that supreme right over the provinces, and that authority which now belonged to himself. Natives and residents of those countries should enjoy liberty, just so long as the exercise of the Catholic religion flourished there, and not one day nor hour longer.

Philip then proceeded flatly to refuse the India navigation, giving reasons very satisfactory to himself why the provinces ought cheerfully to abstain from that traffic. If the confederates, in consequence of the conditions thus definitely announced, moved by their innate pride and obstinacy, and relying on the assistance of their allies, should break off the negotiations, then it would be desirable to adopt the plan proposed by Jeannin to Richardot, and conclude a truce for five or six years. The king expressed his own decided preference for a truce rather than a peace, and his conviction that Jeannin had made the suggestion by command of his sovereign.

The negotiators stood exactly where they did when Friar John, disguised as a merchant, first made his bow to the Prince and Barneveld in the palace at the Hague.

The archduke, on receiving at last this peremptory letter from the king, had nothing for it but to issue instructions accordingly to the plenipotentiaries at the Hague. A decisive conference between those diplomatists and the States' commissioners took place immediately afterwards.

It was on the 20th August.

Although it had been agreed on the 1st May to break off negotiations on the ensuing 1st of August, should no result be reached, yet three weeks beyond that period had been suffered to elapse, under a tacit agreement to wait a little longer for the return of the friar. President Jeannin, too, had gone to Paris on the 20th June, to receive new and important instructions; verbal and written, from his sovereign, and during his absence it had not been thought expedient to transact much business. Jeannin returned to the Hague on the 15th of August, and, as definite instructions from king and archduke had now arrived, there seemed no possibility of avoiding an explanation.

The Spanish envoys accordingly, with much gravity, and as if they had been propounding some cheerful novelty, announced to the assembled commissioners that all reports hitherto flying about as to the Spanish king's intentions were false.



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His Majesty had no intention of refusing to give up the sovereignty of the provinces. On the contrary, they were instructed to concede that sovereignty freely and frankly to my lords the States-General—a pearl and a precious jewel, the like of which no prince had ever given away before. Yet the king desired neither gold nor silver, neither cities nor anything else of value in exchange. He asked only for that which was indispensable to the tranquillity of his conscience before God, to wit, the re-establishment in those countries of the Catholic Apostolic Roman religion. This there could surely be no reasons for refusing. They owed it as a return for the generosity of the king, they owed it to their own relatives, they owed it to the memory of their ancestors, not to show greater animosity to the ancient religion than to the new and pernicious sect of Anabaptists, born into the world for the express purpose of destroying empires; they owed it to their many fellow-citizens, who would otherwise be driven into exile, because deprived of that which is dearest to humanity.

In regard to the East India navigation, inasmuch as the provinces had no right whatever to it, and as no other prince but the sovereign of Spain had any pretensions to it, his Majesty expected that the States would at once desist from it.

This was the magnificent result of twenty months of diplomacy. As the king's father had long ago flung away the pearl and precious jewel which the son now made a merit of selling to its proprietors at the price of their life's blood—the world's commerce—it is difficult to imagine that Richardot, while communicating this preposterous ultimatum, could have kept his countenance. But there were case-hardened politicians on both sides. The proposition was made and received with becoming seriousness, and it was decided by the States' commissioners to make no answer at all on that occasion. They simply promised to render their report to the States-General, who doubtless would make short work with the matter.

They made their report and it occasioned a tumult. Every member present joined in a general chorus of wrathful denunciation. The Spanish commissioners were infamous swindlers, it was loudly asserted. There should be no more dealings with them at all. Spain was a power only to be treated with on the battle-field. In the tempest of general rage no one would listen to argument, no one asked which would be the weaker, which the stronger party, what resources for the renewed warfare could be found or who would be the allies of the republic. Hatred, warlike fury and scorn at the duplicity with which they had been treated, washed every more politic sentiment away, and metamorphosed that body of burghers as in an instant. The negotiations should be broken off, not on one point, but on all points, and nothing was left but to prepare instantly for war. Three days later, after the French and English ambassadors,

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as well as Prince Maurice and Count Lewis William, had been duly consulted, comparative calm was restored, and a decisive answer was unanimously voted by the States-General. The proposition of the commissioners was simply declared to be in direct violation of the sovereignty and freedom of the country, and it was announced that, if it should be persisted in, the whole negotiation might be considered as broken off. A formal answer to the royal propositions would be communicated likewise to the envoys of foreign powers, in order that the royal commissioners might be placed completely in the wrong.

On the 25th August an elaborate response was accordingly delivered in writing by the States' commissioners to those of the archdukes and king, it being at the same time declared by Barneveld and his colleagues that their functions were ended, and that this document, emanating from the States-General, was a sovereign resolution, not a diplomatic note.

The contents of this paper may be inferred from all that has been previously narrated. The republic knew its own mind, and had always expressed itself with distinctness. The Spanish Government having at last been brought to disclose its intentions, there was an end to the negotiations for peace. The rupture was formally announced.

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