

Life and Death of John of Barneveld, Advocate of Holland : with a view of the primary causes and movements of the Thirty Years' War, 1610b eBook

Life and Death of John of Barneveld, Advocate of Holland : with a view of the primary causes and movements of the Thirty Years' War, 1610b by John Lothrop Motley

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THE LIFE AND DEATH of JOHN OF BARNEVELD, ADVOCATE OF HOLLAND

WITH A VIEW OF THE PRIMARY CAUSES AND MOVEMENTS OF THE THIRTY
YEARS' WAR

By John Lothrop Motley, D.C.L., LL.D.

MOTLEY'S HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS, Project Gutenberg Edition, Volume 88

The Life and Death of John of Barneveld, v3, 1610

CHAPTER IV.

Difficult Position of Barneveld—Insurrection at Utrecht subdued by the States' Army—
Special Embassies to England and France—Anger of the King with Spain and the
Archdukes—Arrangements of Henry for the coming War—Position of Spain—Anxiety of
the King for the Presence of Barneveld in Paris—Arrival of the Dutch Commissioners in
France and their brilliant Reception—Their Interview with the King and his Ministers—
Negotiations—Delicate Position of the Dutch Government— India Trade—Simon



Danzer, the Corsair—Conversations of Henry with the Dutch Commissioners—Letter of the King to Archduke Albert— Preparations for the Queen’s Coronation, and of Henry to open the Campaign in person—Perplexities of Henry—Forebodings and Warnings —- The Murder accomplished—Terrible Change in France—Triumph of Concini and of Spain—Downfall of Sully—Disputes of the Grandees among themselves—Special Mission of Condence from the Republic— Conference on the great Enterprise—- Departure of van der Myle from Paris.

There were reasons enough why the Advocate could not go to Paris at this juncture. It was absurd in Henry to suppose it possible. Everything rested on Barneveld’s shoulders. During the year which had just passed he had drawn almost every paper, every instruction in regard to the peace negotiations, with his own hand, had assisted at every conference, guided and mastered the whole course of a most difficult and intricate negotiation, in which he had not only been obliged to make allowance for the humbled pride and baffled ambition of the ancient foe of the Netherlands, but to steer clear of the innumerable jealousies, susceptibilities, cavillings, and insolences of their patronizing friends.

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It was his brain that worked, his tongue that spoke, his restless pen that never paused. His was not one of those easy posts, not unknown in the modern administration of great affairs, where the subordinate furnishes the intellect, the industry, the experience, while the bland superior, gratifying the world with his sign-manual, appropriates the applause. So long as he lived and worked, the States-General and the States of Holland were like a cunningly contrived machine, which seemed to be alive because one invisible but mighty mind vitalized the whole.

And there had been enough to do. It was not until midsummer of 1609 that the ratifications of the Treaty of Truce, one of the great triumphs in the history of diplomacy, had been exchanged, and scarcely had this period been put to the eternal clang of arms when the death of a lunatic threw the world once more into confusion. It was obvious to Barneveld that the issue of the Cleve-Julich affair, and of the tremendous religious fermentation in Bohemia, Moravia, and Austria, must sooner or later lead to an immense war. It was inevitable that it would devolve upon the States to sustain their great though vacillating, their generous though encroaching, their sincere though most irritating, ally. And yet, thoroughly as Barneveld had mastered all the complications and perplexities of the religious and political question, carefully as he had calculated the value of the opposing forces which were shaking Christendom, deeply as he had studied the characters of Matthias and Rudolph, of Charles of Denmark and Ferdinand of Graz, of Anhalt and Maximilian, of Brandenburg and Neuburg, of James and Philip, of Paul V. and Charles Emmanuel, of Sully and Yilleroy, of Salisbury and Bacon, of Lerma and Infantado; adroitly as he could measure, weigh, and analyse all these elements in the great problem which was forcing itself on the attention of Europe—there was one factor with which it was difficult for this austere republican, this cold, unsuseptible statesman, to deal: the intense and imperious passion of a greybeard for a woman of sixteen.

For out of the cauldron where the miscellaneous elements of universal war were bubbling rose perpetually the fantastic image of Margaret Montmorency: the fatal beauty at whose caprice the heroic sword of Ivry and Cahors was now uplifted and now sheathed.

Aerssens was baffled, and reported the humours of the court where he resided as changing from hour to hour. To the last he reported that all the mighty preparations then nearly completed “might evaporate in smoke” if the Princess of Conde should come back. Every ambassador in Paris was baffled. Peter Pecquius was as much in the dark as Don Inigo de Cardenas, as Ubaldini or Edmonds. No one save Sully, Aerssens, Barneveld, and the King knew the extensive arrangements and profound combinations which had been made for the war. Yet not Sully, Aerssens, Barneveld, or the King, knew whether or not the war would really be made.



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Barneveld had to deal with this perplexing question day by day. His correspondence with his ambassador at Henry's court was enormous, and we have seen that the Ambassador was with the King almost daily; sleeping or waking; at dinner or the chase; in the cabinet or the courtyard.

But the Advocate was also obliged to carry in his arms, as it were, the brood of snarling, bickering, cross-grained German princes, to supply them with money, with arms, with counsel, with brains; to keep them awake when they went to sleep, to steady them in their track, to teach them to go alone. He had the congress at Hall in Suabia to supervise and direct; he had to see that the ambassadors of the new republic, upon which they in reality were already half dependent and chafing at their dependence, were treated with the consideration due to the proud position which the Commonwealth had gained. Questions of etiquette were at that moment questions of vitality. He instructed his ambassadors to leave the congress on the spot if they were ranked after the envoys of princes who were only feudatories of the Emperor. The Dutch ambassadors, "recognising and relying upon no superiors but God and their sword," placed themselves according to seniority with the representatives of proudest kings.

He had to extemporize a system of free international communication with all the powers of the earth—with the Turk at Constantinople, with the Czar of Muscovy; with the potentates of the Baltic, with both the Indies. The routine of a long established and well organized foreign office in a time-honoured state running in grooves; with well-balanced springs and well oiled wheels, may be a luxury of civilization; but it was a more arduous task to transact the greatest affairs of a state springing suddenly into recognized existence and mainly dependent for its primary construction and practical working on the hand of one man.

Worse than all, he had to deal on the most dangerous and delicate topics of state with a prince who trembled at danger and was incapable of delicacy; to show respect for a character that was despicable, to lean on a royal word falser than water, to inhale almost daily the effluvia from a court compared to which the harem of Henry was a temple of vestals. The spectacle of the slobbering James among his Kars and Hays and Villiers's and other minions is one at which history covers her eyes and is dumb; but the republican envoys, with instructions from a Barneveld, were obliged to face him daily, concealing their disgust, and bowing reverentially before him as one of the arbiters of their destinies and the Solomon of his epoch.

A special embassy was sent early in the year to England to convey the solemn thanks of the Republic to the King for his assistance in the truce negotiations, and to treat of the important matters then pressing on the attention of both powers. Contemporaneously was to be despatched the embassy for which Henry was waiting so impatiently at Paris.

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Certainly the Advocate had enough with this and other, important business already mentioned to detain him at his post. Moreover the first year of peace had opened disastrously in the Netherlands. Tremendous tempests such as had rarely been recorded even in that land of storms had raged all the winter. The waters everywhere had burst their dykes and inundations, which threatened to engulf the whole country, and which had caused enormous loss of property and even of life, were alarming the most courageous. It was difficult in many district to collect the taxes for the every-day expenses of the community, and yet the Advocate knew that the Republic would soon be forced to renew the war on a prodigious scale.

Still more to embarrass the action of the government and perplex its statesmen, an alarming and dangerous insurrection broke out in Utrecht.

In that ancient seat of the hard-fighting, imperious, and opulent sovereign archbishops of the ancient church an important portion of the population had remained Catholic. Another portion complained of the abolition of various privileges which they had formerly enjoyed; among others that of a monopoly of beer-brewing for the province. All the population, as is the case with all populations in all countries and all epochs, complained of excessive taxation.

A clever politician, Dirk Kanter by name, a gentleman by birth, a scholar and philosopher by pursuit and education, and a demagogue by profession, saw an opportunity of taking an advantage of this state of things. More than twenty years before he had been burgomaster of the city, and had much enjoyed himself in that position. He was tired of the learned leisure to which the ingratitude of his fellow-citizens had condemned him. He seems to have been of easy virtue in the matter of religion, a Catholic, an Arminian, an ultra orthodox Contra-Remonstrant by turns. He now persuaded a number of determined partisans that the time had come for securing a church for the public worship of the ancient faith, and at the same time for restoring the beer brewery, reducing the taxes, recovering lost privileges, and many other good things. Beneath the whole scheme lay a deep design to effect the secession of the city and with it of the opulent and important province of Utrecht from the Union. Kanter had been heard openly to avow that after all the Netherlands had flourished under the benign sway of the House of Burgundy, and that the time would soon come for returning to that enviable condition.

By a concerted assault the city hall was taken possession of by main force, the magistracy was overpowered, and a new board of senators and common council-men appointed, Kanter and a devoted friend of his, Heldingen by name, being elected burgomasters.

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The States-Provincial of Utrecht, alarmed at these proceedings in the city, appealed for protection against violence to the States-General under the 3rd Article of the Union, the fundamental pact which bore the name of Utrecht itself. Prince Maurice proceeded to the city at the head of a detachment of troops to quell the tumults. Kanter and his friends were plausible enough to persuade him of the legality and propriety of the revolution which they had effected, and to procure his formal confirmation of the new magistracy. Intending to turn his military genius and the splendour of his name to account, they contrived to keep him for a time at least in an amiable enthrallment, and induced him to contemplate in their interest the possibility of renouncing the oath which subjected him to the authority of the States of Utrecht. But the far-seeing eye of Barneveld could not be blind to the danger which at this crisis beset the Stadholder and the whole republic. The Prince was induced to return to the Hague, but the city continued by armed revolt to maintain the new magistracy. They proceeded to reduce the taxes, and in other respects to carry out the measures on the promise of which they had come into power. Especially the Catholic party sustained Kanter and his friends, and promised themselves from him and from his influence over Prince Maurice to obtain a power of which they had long been deprived.

The States-General now held an assembly at Woerden, and summoned the malcontents of Utrecht to bring before that body a statement of their grievances. This was done, but there was no satisfactory arrangement possible, and the deputation returned to Utrecht, the States-General to the Hague. The States-Provincial of Utrecht urged more strongly than ever upon the assembly of the Union to save the city from the hands of a reckless and revolutionary government. The States-General resolved accordingly to interfere by force. A considerable body of troops was ordered to march at once upon Utrecht and besiege the city. Maurice, in his capacity of captain-general and stadholder of the province, was summoned to take charge of the army. He was indisposed to do so, and pleaded sickness. The States, determined that the name of Nassau should not be used as an encouragement to disobedience, and rebellion, then directed the brother of Maurice, Frederic Henry, youngest son of William the Silent, to assume the command. Maurice insisted that his brother was too young, and that it was unjust to allow so grave a responsibility to fall upon his shoulders. The States, not particularly pleased with the Prince's attitude at this alarming juncture, and made anxious by the glamour which seemed to possess him since his conferences with the revolutionary party at Utrecht, determined not to yield.

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The army marched forth and laid siege to the city, Prince Frederic Henry at its head. He was sternly instructed by the States-General, under whose orders he acted, to take possession of the city at all hazards. He was to insist on placing there a garrison of 2000 foot and 300 horse, and to permit not another armed man within the walls. The members of the council of state and of the States of Utrecht accompanied the army. For a moment the party in power was disposed to resist the forces of the Union. Dick Kanter and his friends were resolute enough; the Catholic priests turned out among the rest with their spades and worked on the entrenchments. The impossibility of holding the city against the overwhelming power of the States was soon obvious, and the next day the gates were opened, and easy terms were granted. The new magistracy was set aside, the old board that had been deposed by the rebels reinstated. The revolution and the counterrevolution were alike bloodless, and it was determined that the various grievances of which the discontented party had complained should be referred to the States-General, to Prince Maurice, to the council of state, and to the ambassadors of France and England. Amnesty was likewise decreed on submission.

The restored government was Arminian in its inclinations, the revolutionary one was singularly compounded both of Catholic and of ultra-orthodox elements. Quiet was on the whole restored, but the resources of the city were crippled. The event occurring exactly at the crisis of the Clove and Julich expedition angered the King of France.

“The trouble of Utrecht,” wrote Aerssens to Barneveld, “has been turned to account here marvellously, the Archdukes and Spaniards boasting that many more revolts like this may be at once expected. I have explained to his Majesty, who has been very much alarmed about it, both its source and the hopes that it will be appeased by the prudence of his Excellency Prince Maurice and the deputies of the States. The King desires that everything should be pacified as soon as possible, so that there may be no embarrassment to the course of public affairs. But he fears, he tells me, that this may create some new jealousy between Prince Maurice and yourself. I don’t comprehend what he means, although he held this language to me very expressly and without reserve. I could only answer that you were living on the best of terms together in perfect amity and intelligence. If you know if this talk of his has any other root, please to enlighten me, that I may put a stop to false reports, for I know nothing of affairs except what you tell me.”

King James, on the other hand, thoroughly approved the promptness of the States-General in suppressing the tumult.

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Nothing very serious of alike nature occurred in Utrecht until the end of the year, when a determined and secret conspiracy was discovered, having for its object to overpower the garrison and get bodily possession of Colonel John Ogle, the military commander of the town. At the bottom of the movement were the indefatigable Dirk Kanter and his friend Hedingen. The attempt was easily suppressed, and the two were banished from the town. Kanter died subsequently in North Holland, in the odour of ultra-orthodoxy. Four of the conspirators—a post-master, two shoemakers, and a sexton, who had bound themselves by oath to take the lives of two eminent Arminian preachers, besides other desperate deeds—were condemned to death, but pardoned on the scaffold. Thus ended the first revolution at Utrecht.

Its effect did not cease, however, with the tumults which were its original manifestations. This earliest insurrection in organized shape against the central authority of the States-General; this violent though abortive effort to dissolve the Union and to nullify its laws; this painful necessity for the first time imposed upon the federal government to take up arms against misguided citizens of the Republic, in order to save itself from disintegration and national death, were destined to be followed by far graver convulsions on the self-same spot. Religious differences and religious hatreds were to mingle their poison with antagonistic political theories and personal ambitions, and to develop on a wide scale the danger ever lurking in a constitution whose fundamental law was unstable, ill defined, and liable to contradictory interpretations. For the present it need only be noticed that the States-General, guided by Barneveld, most vigorously suppressed the local revolt and the incipient secession, while Prince Maurice, the right arm of the executive, the stadholder of the province, and the representative of the military power of the Commonwealth, was languid in the exertion of that power, inclined to listen to the specious arguments of the Utrecht rebels, and accused at least of tampering with the fell spirit which the Advocate was resolute to destroy. Yet there was no suspicion of treason, no taint of rebellion, no accusation of unpatriotic motives uttered against the Stadholder.

There was a doubt as to the true maxims by which the Confederacy was to be governed, and at this moment, certainly, the Prince and the Advocate represented opposite ideas. There was a possibility, at a future day, when the religious and political parties might develop themselves on a wider scale and the struggles grow fiercer, that the two great champions in the conflict might exchange swords and inflict mutual and poisoned wounds. At present the party of the Union had triumphed, with Barneveld at its head. At a later but not far distant day, similar scenes might be enacted in the ancient city of Utrecht, but with a strange difference and change in the cast of parts and with far more tragical results.



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For the moment the moderate party in the Church, those more inclined to Arminianism and the supremacy of the civil authority in religious matters, had asserted their ascendancy in the States-General, and had prevented the threatened rupture.

Meantime it was doubly necessary to hasten the special embassies to France and to England, in both which countries much anxiety as to the political health and strength of the new republic had been excited by these troubles in Utrecht. It was important for the States-General to show that they were not crippled, and would not shrink from the coming conflict, but would justify the reliance placed on them by their allies.

Thus there were reasons enough why Barneveld could not himself leave the country in the eventful spring of 1610. It must be admitted, however, that he was not backward in placing his nearest relatives in places of honour, trust, and profit.

His eldest son Reinier, Seigneur of Groeneveld, had been knighted by Henry IV.; his youngest, William, afterwards called Seigneur of Stoutenburg, but at this moment bearing the not very mellifluous title of Craimgepolder, was a gentleman-in-waiting at that king's court, with a salary of 3000 crowns a year. He was rather a favourite with the easy-going monarch, but he gave infinite trouble to the Dutch ambassador Aerssens, who, feeling himself under immense obligations to the Advocate and professing for him boundless gratitude, did his best to keep the idle, turbulent, extravagant, and pleasure-loving youth up to the strict line of his duties.

"Your son is in debt again," wrote Aerssens, on one occasion, "and troubled for money. He is in danger of going to the usurers. He says he cannot keep himself for less than 200 crowns a month. This is a large allowance, but he has spent much more than that. His life is not irregular nor his dress remarkably extravagant. His difficulty is that he will not dine regularly with me nor at court. He will keep his own table and have company to dinner. That is what is ruining him. He comes sometimes to me, not for the dinner nor the company, but for tennis, which he finds better in my faubourg than in town. His trouble comes from the table, and I tell you frankly that you must regulate his expenses or they will become very onerous to you. I am ashamed of them and have told him so a hundred times, more than if he had been my own brother. It is all for love of you I have been all to him that could be expected of a man who is under such vast obligations to you; and I so much esteem the honour of your friendship that I should always neglect my private affairs in order to do everything for your service and meet your desires If M. de Craimgepolder comes back from his visit home, you must restrict him in two things, the table and tennis, and you can do this if you require him to follow the King assiduously as his service requires."



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Something at a future day was to be heard of William of Barneveld, as well as of his elder brother Reinier, and it is good, therefore, to have these occasional glimpses of him while in the service of the King and under the supervision of one who was then his father's devoted friend, Francis Aerssens. There were to be extraordinary and tragical changes in the relations of parties and of individuals ere many years should go by.

Besides the sons of the Advocate, his two sons-in-law, Brederode, Seignior of Veenhuizen, and Cornelis van der Myle, were constantly employed in important embassies. Van der Myle had been the first ambassador to the great Venetian republic, and was now placed at the head of the embassy to France, an office which it was impossible at that moment for the Advocate to discharge. At the same critical moment Barneveld's brother Elias, Pensionary of Rotterdam, was appointed one of the special high commissioners to the King of Great Britain.

It is necessary to give an account of this embassy.

They were provided with luminous and minute instructions from the hand of the Advocate.

They were, in the first place, and ostensibly, to thank the King for his services in bringing about the truce, which, truly, had been of the slightest, as was very well known. They were to explain, on the part of the States, their delay in sending this solemn commission, caused by the tardiness of the King of Spain in sending his ratification to the treaty, and by the many disputations caused by the irresolutions of the Archdukes and the obstinacy of their commissioners in regard to their many contraventions of the treaty. After those commissioners had gone, further hindrances had been found in the "extraordinary tempests, high floods, rising of the waters, both of the ocean and the rivers, and the very disastrous inundations throughout nearly all the United Provinces, with the immense and exorbitant damage thus inflicted, both on the public and on many individuals; in addition to all which were to be mentioned the troubles in the city of Utrecht."

They were, in almost hyperbolic language, directed to express the eternal gratitude of the States for the constant favours received by them from the crown of England, and their readiness to stand forth at any moment with sincere affection and to the utmost of their power, at all times and seasons, in resistance of any attempts against his Majesty's person or crown, or against the Prince of Wales or the royal family. They were to thank him for his "prudent, heroic, and courageous resolve to suffer nothing to be done under colour of justice, authority, or any other pretext, to the hindrance of the Elector of Brandenburg and Palatine of Neuburg, in the maintenance of their lawful rights and possession of the principalities of Julich, Cleve, and Berg, and other provinces."

By this course his Majesty, so the commissioners were to state, would put an end to the imaginations of those who thought they could give the law to everybody according to their pleasure.

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They were to assure the King that the States-General would exert themselves to the utmost to second his heroic resolution, notwithstanding the enormous burthens of their everlasting war, the very exorbitant damage caused by the inundations, and the sensible diminution in the contributions and other embarrassments then existing in the country.

They were to offer 2000 foot and 500 horse for the general purpose under Prince Henry of Nassau, besides the succours furnished by the King of France and the electors and princes of Germany. Further assistance in men, artillery, and supplies were promised under certain contingencies, and the plan of the campaign on the Meuse in conjunction with the King of France was duly mapped.

They were to request a corresponding promise of men and money from the King of Great Britain, and they were to propose for his approval a closer convention for mutual assistance between his Majesty, the United Netherlands, the King of France, the electors and princes and other powers of Germany; as such close union would be very beneficial to all Christendom. It would put a stop to all unjust occupations, attempts, and intrigues, and if the King was thereto inclined, he was requested to indicate time and place for making such a convention.

The commissioners were further to point out the various contraventions on the part of the Archdukes of the Treaty of Truce, and were to give an exposition of the manner in which the States-General had quelled the tumults at Utrecht, and reasons why such a course had of necessity been adopted.

They were instructed to state that, "over and above the great expenses of the late war and the necessary maintenance of military forces to protect their frontiers against their suspected new friends or old enemies, the Provinces were burthened with the cost of the succour to the Elector of Brandenburg and Palatine of Neuburg, and would be therefore incapable of furnishing the payments coming due to his Majesty. They were accordingly to sound his Majesty as to whether a good part of the debt might not be remitted or at least an arrangement made by which the terms should begin to run only after a certain number of years."

They were also directed to open the subject of the fisheries on the coasts of Great Britain, and to remonstrate against the order lately published by the King forbidding all foreigners from fishing on those coasts. This was to be set forth as an infringement both of natural law and of ancient treaties, and as a source of infinite danger to the inhabitants of the United Provinces.

The Seignior of Warmond, chief of the commission, died on the 15th April. His colleagues met at Brielle on the 16th, ready to take passage to England in the ship of war, the Hound. They were, however, detained there six days by head winds and great storms, and it was not until the 22nd that they were able to put to sea. The following

evening their ship cast anchor in Gravesend. Half an hour before, the Duke of Wurtemberg had arrived from Flushing in a ship of war brought from France by the Prince of Anhalt.



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Sir Lewis Lewkener, master of ceremonies, had been waiting for the ambassadors at Gravesend, and informed them that the royal barges were to come next morning from London to take them to town. They remained that night on board the Hound, and next morning, the wind blowing up the river, they proceeded in their ship as far as Blackwall, where they were formally received and bade welcome in the name of the King by Sir Thomas Cornwallis and Sir George Carew, late ambassador in France. Escorted by them and Sir Lewis, they were brought in the court barges to Tower Wharf. Here the royal coaches were waiting, in which they were taken to lodgings provided for them in the city at the house of a Dutch merchant. Noel de Caron, Seigneur of Schonewal, resident ambassador of the States in London, was likewise there to greet them. This was Saturday night: On the following Tuesday they went by appointment to the Palace of Whitehall in royal carriages for their first audience. Manifestations of as entire respect and courtesy had thus been made to the Republican envoys as could be shown to the ambassadors of the greatest sovereigns. They found the King seated on his throne in the audience chamber, accompanied by the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, the Lord High Treasurer and Lord High Admiral, the Duke of Lenox, the Earls of Arundel and Northampton, and many other great nobles and dignitaries. James rose from his seat, took off his hat, and advanced several paces to meet the ambassadors, and bade them courteously and respectfully welcome. He then expressed his regret at the death of the Seigneur of Warmond, and after the exchange of a few commonplaces listened, still with uncovered head, to the opening address.

The spokesman, after thanking the King for his condolences on the death of the chief commissioner, whom, as was stated with whimsical simplicity, "the good God had called to Himself after all his luggage had been put on board ship," proceeded in the French language to give a somewhat abbreviated paraphrase of Barneveld's instructions.

When this was done and intimation made that they would confer more fully with his Majesty's council on the subjects committed to their charge, the ambassadors were conducted home with the same ceremonies as had accompanied their arrival. They received the same day the first visit from the ambassadors of France and Venice, Boderie and Carrero, and had a long conference a few days afterwards with the High Treasurer, Lord Salisbury.

On the 3rd May they were invited to attend the pompous celebration of the festival of St. George in the palace at Westminster, where they were placed together with the French ambassador in the King's oratorium; the Dukes of Wurtemberg and Brunswick being in that of the Queen.

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These details are especially to be noted, and were at the moment of considerable importance, for this was the first solemn and extraordinary embassy sent by the rebel Netherlanders, since their independent national existence had been formally vindicated, to Great Britain, a power which a quarter of a century before had refused the proffered sovereignty over them. Placed now on exactly the same level with the representatives of emperors and kings, the Republican envoys found themselves looked upon by the world with different eyes from those which had regarded their predecessors askance, and almost with derision, only seven years before. At that epoch the States' commissioners, Barneveld himself at the head of them, had gone solemnly to congratulate King James on his accession, had scarcely been admitted to audience by king or minister, and had found themselves on great festivals unsprinkled with the holy water of the court, and of no more account than the crowd of citizens and spectators who thronged the streets, gazing with awe at the distant radiance of the throne.

But although the ambassadors were treated with every external consideration befitting their official rank, they were not likely to find themselves in the most genial atmosphere when they should come to business details. If there was one thing in the world that James did not intend to do, it was to get himself entangled in war with Spain, the power of all others which he most revered and loved. His "heroic and courageous resolve" to defend the princes, on which the commissioners by instructions of the Advocate had so highly complimented him, was not strong enough to carry him much beyond a vigorous phraseology. He had not awoke from the delusive dream of the Spanish marriage which had dexterously been made to flit before him, and he was not inclined, for the sake of the Republic which he hated the more because obliged to be one of its sponsors, to risk the animosity of a great power which entertained the most profound contempt for him. He was destined to find himself involved more closely than he liked, and through family ties, with the great Protestant movement in Germany, and the unfortunate "Winter King" might one day find his father-in-law as unstable a reed to lean upon as the States had found their godfather, or the Brandenburgs and Neuburgs at the present juncture their great ally. Meantime, as the Bohemian troubles had not yet reached the period of actual explosion, and as Henry's wide-reaching plan against the House of Austria had been strangely enough kept an inviolable secret by the few statesmen, like Sully and Barneveld, to whom they had been confided, it was necessary for the King and his ministers to deal cautiously and plausibly with the Dutch ambassadors. Their conferences were mere dancing among eggs, and if no actual mischief were done, it was the best result that could be expected.

On the 8th of May, the commissioners met in the council chamber at Westminster, and discussed all the matters contained in their instructions with the members of the council; the Lord Treasurer Salisbury, Earl of Northampton, Privy Seal and Warden of the Cinque Ports, Lord Nottingham, Lord High Admiral, the Lord Chamberlain, Earl of Suffolk, Earls of Shrewsbury, Worcester, and several others being present.



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The result was not entirely satisfactory. In regard to the succour demanded for the possessory princes, the commissioners were told that they seemed to come with a long narrative of their great burthens during the war, damage from inundations, and the like, to excuse themselves from doing their share in the succour, and thus the more to overload his Majesty, who was not much interested in the matter, and was likewise greatly encumbered by various expenses. The King had already frankly declared his intention to assist the princes with the payment of 4000 men, and to send proportionate artillery and powder from England. As the States had supplies in their magazines enough to move 12,000 men, he proposed to draw upon those, reimbursing the States for what was thus consumed by his contingent.

With regard to the treaty of close alliance between France, Great Britain, the princes, and the Republic, which the ambassadors had proposed, the—Lord Treasurer and his colleagues gave a reply far from gratifying. His Majesty had not yet decided on this point, they said. The King of France had already proposed to treat for such an alliance, but it did not at present seem worth while for all to negotiate together.

This was a not over-courteous hint that the Republic was after all not expected to place herself at the council-board of kings on even terms of intimacy and fraternal alliance.

What followed was even less flattering. If his Majesty, it was intimated, should decide to treat with the King of France, he would not shut the door on their High Mightinesses; but his Majesty was not yet exactly informed whether his Majesty had not certain rights over the provinces 'in petitorio.'

This was a scarcely veiled insinuation against the sovereignty of the States, a sufficiently broad hint that they were to be considered in a certain degree as British provinces. To a soldier like Maurice, to a statesman like Barneveld, whose sympathies already were on the side of France, such rebuffs and taunts were likely to prove unpalatable. The restiveness of the States at the continual possession by Great Britain of those important sea-ports the cautionary towns, a fact which gave colour to these innuendoes, was sure to be increased by arrogant language on the part of the English ministers. The determination to be rid of their debt to so overbearing an ally, and to shake off the shackles imposed by the costly mortgages, grew in strength from that hour.

In regard to the fisheries, the Lord Treasurer and his colleagues expressed amazement that the ambassadors should consider the subjects of their High Mightinesses to be so much beloved by his Majesty. Why should they of all other people be made an exception of, and be exempt from, the action of a general edict? The reasons for these orders in council ought to be closely examined. It would be very difficult to bring the opinions of the English jurists into harmony with those of the States. Meantime it would be well to look up such treaties as might be in existence, and have a special joint commission to confer together on the subject. It was very plain, from the course of the

conversation, that the Netherland fishermen were not to be allowed, without paying roundly for a license, to catch herrings on the British coasts as they had heretofore done.

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Not much more of importance was transacted at this first interview between the ambassadors and the King's ministers. Certainly they had not yet succeeded in attaining their great object, the formation of an alliance offensive and defensive between Great Britain and the Republic in accordance with the plan concerted between Henry and Barneveld. They could find but slender encouragement for the warlike plans to which France and the States were secretly committed; nor could they obtain satisfactory adjustment of affairs more pacific and commercial in their tendencies. The English ministers rather petulantly remarked that, while last year everybody was talking of a general peace, and in the present conjuncture all seemed to think, or at least to speak, of nothing but a general war, they thought best to defer consideration of the various subjects connected with duties on the manufactures and products of the respective countries, the navigation laws, the "entrecours," and other matters of ancient agreement and controversy, until a more convenient season.

After the termination of the verbal conference, the ambassadors delivered to the King's government, in writing, to be pondered by the council and recorded in the archives, a summary of the statements which had been thus orally treated. The document was in French, and in the main a paraphrase of the Advocate's instructions, the substance of which has been already indicated. In regard, however, to the far-reaching designs of Spain, and the corresponding attitude which it would seem fitting for Great Britain to assume, and especially the necessity of that alliance the proposal for which had in the conference been received so haughtily, their language was far plainer, bolder, and more vehement than that of the instructions.

"Considering that the effects show," they said, "that those who claim the monarchy of Christendom, and indeed of the whole world, let slip no opportunity which could in any way serve their designs, it is suitable to the grandeur of his Majesty the King, and to the station in which by the grace of the good God he is placed, to oppose himself thereto for the sake of the common liberty of Christendom, to which end, and in order the better to prevent all unjust usurpations, there could be no better means devised than a closer alliance between his Majesty and the Most Christian King, My Lords the States-General, and the electors, princes, and states of Germany. Their High Mightinesses would therefore be most glad to learn that his Majesty was inclined to such a course, and would be glad to discuss the subject when and wherever his Majesty should appoint, or would readily enter into such an alliance on reasonable conditions."

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This language and the position taken up by the ambassadors were highly approved by their government, but it was fated that no very great result was to be achieved by this embassy. Very elaborate documents, exhaustive in legal lore, on the subject of the herring fisheries, and of the right to fish in the ocean and on foreign coasts, fortified by copious citations from the 'Pandects' and 'Institutes' of Justinian, were presented for the consideration of the British government, and were answered as learnedly, exhaustively, and ponderously. The English ministers were also reminded that the curing of herrings had been invented in the fifteenth century by a citizen of Biervliet, the inscription on whose tombstone recording that faces might still be read in the church of that town.

All this did not prevent, however, the Dutch herring fishermen from being excluded from the British waters unless they chose to pay for licenses.

The conferences were however for a season interrupted, and a new aspect was given to affairs by an unforeseen and terrible event.

Meanwhile it is necessary to glance for a moment at the doings of the special embassy to France, the instructions for which were prepared by Barneveld almost at the same moment at which he furnished those for the commission to England.

The ambassadors were Walraven, Seigneur of Brederode, Cornelis van der Myle, son-in-law of the Advocate, and Jacob van Maldere. Remembering how impatient the King of France had long been for their coming, and that all the preparations and decisions for a great war were kept in suspense until the final secret conferences could be held with the representatives of the States-General, it seems strange enough to us to observe the extreme deliberation with which great affairs of state were then conducted and the vast amount of time consumed in movements and communications which modern science has either annihilated or abridged from days to hours. While Henry was chafing with anxiety in Paris, the ambassadors, having received Barneveld's instructions dated 31st March, set forth on the 8th April from the Hague, reached Rotterdam at noon, and slept at Dordrecht. Next day they went to Breda, where the Prince of Orange insisted upon their passing a couple of days with him in his castle, Easter-day being 11th April. He then provided them with a couple of coaches and pair in which they set forth on their journey, going by way of Antwerp, Ghent, Courtray, Ryssel, to Arras, making easy stages, stopping in the middle of the day to bait, and sleeping at each of the cities thus mentioned, where they duly received the congratulatory visit and hospitalities of their respective magistracies.

While all this time had been leisurely employed in the Netherlands in preparing, instructing, and despatching the commissioners, affairs were reaching a feverish crisis in France.

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The States' ambassador resident thought that it would have been better not to take such public offence at the retreat of the Prince of Conde. The King had enough of life and vigour in him; he could afford to leave the Dauphin to grow up, and when he should one day be established on the throne, he would be able to maintain his heritage. "But," said Aerssens, "I fear that our trouble is not where we say it is, and we don't dare to say where it is." Writing to Carew, former English ambassador in Paris, whom we have just seen in attendance on the States' commissioners in London, he said: "People think that the Princess is wearying herself much under the protection of the Infanta, and very impatient at not obtaining the dissolution of her marriage, which the Duchess of Angouleme is to go to Brussels to facilitate. This is not our business, but I mention it only as the continuation of the Tragedy which you saw begin. Nevertheless I don't know if the greater part of our deliberations is not founded on this matter."

It had been decided to cause the Queen to be solemnly crowned after Easter. She had set her heart with singular persistency upon the ceremony, and it was thought that so public a sacrament would annihilate all the wild projects attributed to Spain through the instrumentality of Conde to cast doubts on the validity of her marriage and the legitimacy of the Dauphin. The King from the first felt and expressed a singular repugnance, a boding apprehension in regard to the coronation, but had almost yielded to the Queen's importunity. He told her he would give his consent provided she sent Concini to Brussels to invite in her own name the Princess of Conde to be present on the occasion. Otherwise he declared that at least the festival should be postponed till September.

The Marquis de Coeuvres remained in disgrace after the failure of his mission, Henry believing that like all the world he had fallen in love with the Princess, and had only sought to recommend himself, not to further the suit of his sovereign.

Meanwhile Henry had instructed his ambassador in Spain, M. de Vaucelas, to tell the King that his reception of Conde within his dominions would be considered an infraction of the treaty of Vervins and a direct act of hostility. The Duke of Lerma answered with a sneer that the Most Christian King had too greatly obliged his Most Catholic Majesty by sustaining his subjects in their rebellion and by aiding them to make their truce to hope now that Conde would be sent back. France had ever been the receptacle of Spanish traitors and rebels from Antonio Perez down, and the King of Spain would always protect wronged and oppressed princes like Conde. France had just been breaking up the friendly relations between Savoy and Spain and goading the Duke into hostilities.



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On the other hand the King had more than one stormy interview with Don Inigo de Cardenas in Paris. That ambassador declared that his master would never abandon his only sister the most serene Infanta, such was the affection he born her, whose dominions were obviously threatened by these French armies about to move to the frontiers. Henry replied that the friends for whom he was arming had great need of his assistance; that his Catholic Majesty was quite right to love his sister, whom he also loved; but that he did not choose that his own relatives should be so much beloved in Spain as they were. "What relatives?" asked Don Inigo. "The Prince of Conde," replied the King, in a rage, "who has been debauched by the Spaniards just as Marshal Biron was, and the Marchioness Verneuil, and so many others. There are none left for them to debauch now but the Dauphin and his brothers." The Ambassador replied that, if the King had consulted him about the affair of Conde, he could have devised a happy issue from it. Henry rejoined that he had sent messages on the subject to his Catholic Majesty, who had not deigned a response, but that the Duke of Lerma had given a very indiscreet one to his ambassador. Don Inigo professed ignorance of any such reply. The King said it was a mockery to affect ignorance of such matters. Thereupon both grew excited and very violent in their discourses; the more so as Henry knowing but little Spanish and the Envoy less French they could only understand from tone and gesture that each was using exceedingly unpleasant language. At last Don Inigo asked what he should write to his sovereign. "Whatever you like," replied the King, and so the audience terminated, each remaining in a towering passion.

Subsequently Villeroy assured the Archduke's ambassador that the King considered the reception given to the Prince in the Spanish dominions as one of the greatest insults and injuries that could be done to him. Nothing could excuse it, said the Secretary of State, and for this reason it was very difficult for the two kings to remain at peace with each other, and that it would be wiser to prevent at once the evil designs of his Catholic Majesty than to leave leisure for the plans to be put into execution, and the claims of the Dauphin to his father's crown to be disputed at a convenient season.

He added that war would not be made for the Princess, but for the Prince, and that even the war in Germany, although Spain took the Emperor's side and France that of the possessory princes, would not necessarily produce a rupture between the two kings if it were not for this affair of the Prince—true cause of the disaster now hanging over Christianity. Pecquius replied by smooth commonplaces in favour of peace with which Villeroy warmly concurred; both sadly expressing the conviction however that the wrath divine had descended on them all on account of their sins.

A few days later, however, the Secretary changed his tone.



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"I will speak to you frankly and clearly," he said to Pecquius, "and tell you as from myself that there is passion, and if one is willing to arrange the affair of the Princess, everything else can be accommodated and appeased. Put if the Princess remain where she is, we are on the eve of a rupture which may set fire to the four corners of Christendom."

Pecquius said he liked to talk roundly, and was glad to find that he had not been mistaken in his opinion, that all these commotions were only made for the Princess, and if all the world was going to war, she would be the principal subject of it. He could not marvel sufficiently, he said, at this vehement passion which brought in its train so great and horrible a conflagration; adding many arguments to show that it was no fault of the Archdukes, but that he who was the cause of all might one day have reason to repent.

Villeroy replied that "the King believed the Princess to be suffering and miserable for love of him, and that therefore he felt obliged to have her sent back to her father."

Pecquius asked whether in his conscience the Secretary of State believed it right or reasonable to make war for such a cause. Villeroy replied by asking "whether even admitting the negative, the Ambassador thought it were wisely done for such a trifle, for a formality, to plunge into extremities and to turn all Christendom upside down."

Pecquius, not considering honour a trifle or a formality, said that "for nothing in the world would his Highness the Archduke descend to a cowardly action or to anything that would sully his honour." Villeroy said that the Prince had compelled his wife, pistol in hand, to follow him to the Netherlands, and that she was no longer bound to obey a husband who forsook country and king. Her father demanded her, and she said "she would rather be strangled than ever to return to the company of her husband." The Archdukes were not justified in keeping her against her will in perpetual banishment. He implored the Ambassador in most pathetic terms to devise some means of sending back the Princess, saying that he who should find such expedient would do the greatest good that was ever done to Christianity, and that otherwise there was no guarantee against a universal war. The first design of the King had been merely to send a moderate succour to the Princes of Brandenburg and Neuburg, which could have given no umbrage to the Archdukes, but now the bitterness growing out of the affairs of the Prince and Princess had caused him to set on foot a powerful army to do worse. He again implored Pecquius to invent some means of sending back the Princess, and the Ambassador besought him ardently to divert the King from his designs. Of this the Secretary of State left little hope and they parted, both very low and dismal in mind. Subsequent conversations with the leading councillors of state convinced Pecquius that these violent menaces were only used to shake the constancy of the Archduke, but that they almost all highly disapproved the policy of the King. "If this war goes on, we are all ruined," said the Duke d'Epemon to the Nuncius.

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Thus there had almost ceased to be any grimacing between the two kings, although it was still a profound mystery where or when hostilities would begin, and whether they would break out at all. Henry frequently remarked that the common opinion all over Europe was working in his favour. Few people in or out of France believed that he meant a rupture, or that his preparations were serious. Thus should he take his enemies unawares and unprepared. Even Aerssens, who saw him almost daily, was sometimes mystified, in spite of Henry's vehement assertions that he was resolved to make war at all hazards and on all sides, provided My Lords the States would second him as they ought, their own existence being at stake.

"For God's sake," cried the King, "let us take the bit into our mouths. Tell your masters that I am quite resolved, and that I am shrieking loudly at their delays." He asked if he could depend on the States, if Barneveld especially would consent to a league with him. The Ambassador replied that for the affair of Cleve and Julich he had instructions to promise entire concurrence, that Barneveld was most resolute in the matter, and had always urged the enterprise and wished information as to the levies making in France and other military preparations.

"Tell him," said Henry, "that they are going on exactly as often before stated, but that we are holding everything in suspense until I have talked with your ambassadors, from whom I wish counsel, safety, and encouragement for doing much more than the Julich business. That alone does not require so great a league and such excessive and unnecessary expense."

The King observed however that the question of the duchies would serve as just cause and excellent pretext to remove those troublesome fellows for ever from his borders and those of the States. Thus the princes would be established safely in their possession and the Republic as well as himself freed from the perpetual suspicions which the Spaniards excited by their vile intrigues, and it was on this general subject that he wished to confer with the special commissioners. It would not be possible for him to throw succour into Julich without passing through Luxemburg in arms. The Archdukes would resist this, and thus a cause of war would arise. His campaign on the Meuse would help the princes more than if he should only aid them by the contingent he had promised. Nor could the jealousy of King James be excited since the war would spring out of the Archdukes' opposition to his passage towards the duchies, as he obviously could not cut himself off from his supplies, leaving a hostile province between himself and his kingdom. Nevertheless he could not stir, he said, without the consent and active support of the States, on whom he relied as his principal buttress and foundation.

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The levies for the Milanese expedition were waiting until Marshal de Lesdiguieres could confer personally with the Duke of Savoy. The reports as to the fidelity of that potentate were not to be believed. He was trifling with the Spanish ambassadors, so Henry was convinced, who were offering him 300,000 crowns a year besides Piombino, Monaco, and two places in the Milanese, if he would break his treaty with France. But he was thought to be only waiting until they should be gone before making his arrangements with Lesdiguieres. "He knows that he can put no trust in Spain, and that he can confide in me," said the King. "I have made a great stroke by thus entangling the King of Spain by the use of a few troops in Italy. But I assure you that there is none but me and My Lords the States that can do anything solid. Whether the Duke breaks or holds fast will make no difference in our first and great designs. For the honour of God I beg them to lose no more time, but to trust in me. I will never deceive them, never abandon them."

At last 25,000 infantry and 5000 cavalry were already in marching order, and indeed had begun to move towards the Luxemburg frontier, ready to co-operate with the States' army and that of the possessory princes for the campaign of the Meuse and Rhine.

Twelve thousand more French troops under Lesdiguieres were to act with the Duke of Savoy, and an army as large was to assemble in the Pyrenees and to operate on the Spanish frontier, in hope of exciting and fomenting an insurrection caused by the expulsion of the Moors. That gigantic act of madness by which Spain thought good at this juncture to tear herself to pieces, driving hundreds of thousands of the most industrious, most intelligent, and most opulent of her population into hopeless exile, had now been accomplished, and was to stand prominent for ever on the records of human fatuity.

Twenty-five thousand Moorish families had arrived at Bayonne, and the Viceroy of Canada had been consulted as to the possibility and expediency of establishing them in that province, although emigration thither seemed less tempting to them than to Virginia. Certainly it was not unreasonable for Henry to suppose that a kingdom thus torn by internal convulsions might be more open to a well organized attack, than capable of carrying out at that moment fresh projects of universal dominion.

As before observed, Sully was by no means in favour of this combined series of movements, although at a later day, when dictating his famous memoirs to his secretaries, he seems to describe himself as enthusiastically applauding and almost originating them. But there is no doubt at all that throughout this eventful spring he did his best to concentrate the whole attack on Luxemburg and the Meuse districts, and wished that the movements in the Milanese and in Provence should be considered merely a slight accessory, as not much more than a diversion to the chief design, while Villeroy



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and his friends chose to consider the Duke of Savoy as the chief element in the war. Sully thoroughly distrusted the Duke, whom he deemed to be always put up at auction between Spain and France and incapable of a sincere or generous policy. He was entirely convinced that Villeroy and Epernon and Jeannin and other earnest Papists in France were secretly inclined to the cause of Spain, that the whole faction of the Queen, in short, were urging this scattering of the very considerable forces now at Henry's command in the hope of bringing him into a false position, in which defeat or an ignominious peace would be the alternative. To concentrate an immense attack upon the Archdukes in the Spanish Netherlands and the debateable duchies would have for its immediate effect the expulsion of the Spaniards out of all those provinces and the establishment of the Dutch commonwealth on an impregnable basis. That this would be to strengthen infinitely the Huguenots in France and the cause of Protestantism in Bohemia, Moravia and Austria, was unquestionable. It was natural, therefore, that the stern and ardent Huguenot should suspect the plans of the Catholics with whom he was in daily council. One day he asked the King plumply in the presence of Villeroy if his Majesty meant anything serious by all these warlike preparations. Henry was wroth, and complained bitterly that one who knew him to the bottom of his soul should doubt him. But Sully could not persuade himself that a great and serious war would be carried on both in the Netherlands and in Italy.

As much as his sovereign he longed for the personal presence of Barneveld, and was constantly urging the States' ambassador to induce his coming to Paris. "You know," said Aerssens, writing to the French ambassador at the Hague, de Russy, "that it is the Advocate alone that has the universal knowledge of the outside and the inside of our commonwealth."

Sully knew his master as well as any man knew him, but it was difficult to fix the chameleon hues of Henry at this momentous epoch. To the Ambassador expressing doubts as to the King's sincerity the Duke asserted that Henry was now seriously piqued with the Spaniard on account of the Conde business. Otherwise Anhalt and the possessory princes and the affair of Cleve might have had as little effect in driving him into war as did the interests of the Netherlands in times past. But the bold demonstration projected would make the "whole Spanish party bleed at the nose; a good result for the public peace."

Therefore Sully sent word to Barneveld, although he wished his name concealed, that he ought to come himself, with full powers to do everything, without referring to any superiors or allowing any secrets to be divulged. The King was too far committed to withdraw, unless coldness on part of the States should give him cause. The Advocate must come prepared to answer all questions; to say how much in men and money the States would

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contribute, and whether they would go into the war with the King as their only ally. He must come with the bridle on his neck. All that Henry feared was being left in the lurch by the States; otherwise he was not afraid of Rome. Sully was urgent that the Provinces should now go vigorously into the war without stumbling at any consideration. Thus they would confirm their national power for all time, but if the opportunity were now lost, it would be their ruin, and posterity would most justly blame them. The King of Spain was so stripped of troops and resources, so embarrassed by the Moors, that in ten months he would not be able to send one man to the Netherlands.

Meantime the Nuncius in Paris was moving heaven and earth; storming, intriguing, and denouncing the course of the King in protecting heresy, when it would have been so easy to extirpate it, encouraging rebellion and disorder throughout Christendom, and embarking in an action against the Church and against his conscience. A new legate was expected daily with the Pope's signature to the new league, and a demand upon the King to sign it likewise, and to pause in a career of which something was suspected, but very little accurately known. The preachers in Paris and throughout the kingdom delivered most vehement sermons against the King, the government, and the Protestants, and seemed to the King to be such "trumpeters of sedition" that he ordered the seneschals and other officers to put a stop to these turbulent discourses, censure their authors, and compel them to stick to their texts.

But the preparations were now so far advanced and going on so warmly that nothing more was wanting than, in the words of Aerssens, "to uncouple the dogs and let them run." Recruits were pouring steadily to their places of rendezvous; their pay having begun to run from the 25th March at the rate of eight sous a day for the private foot soldier and ten sous for a corporal. They were moved in small parties of ten, lodged in the wayside inns, and ordered, on pain of death, to pay for everything they consumed.

It was growing difficult to wait much longer for the arrival of the special ambassadors, when at last they were known to be on their way. Aerssens obtained for their use the Hotel Gondy, formerly the residence of Don Pedro de Toledo, the most splendid private palace in Paris, and recently purchased by the Queen. It was considered expedient that the embassy should make as stately an appearance as that of royal or imperial envoys. He engaged an upholsterer by the King's command to furnish, at his Majesty's expense, the apartments, as the Baron de Gondy, he said, had long since sold and eaten up all the furniture. He likewise laid in six pieces of wine and as many of beer, "tavern drinks" being in the opinion of the thrifty ambassador "both dear and bad."



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He bought a carriage lined with velvet for the commissioners, and another lined with broadcloth for the principal persons of their suite, and with his own coach as a third he proposed to go to Amiens to meet them. They could not get on with fewer than these, he said, and the new carriages would serve their purpose in Paris. He had paid 500 crowns for the two, and they could be sold, when done with, at a slight loss. He bought likewise four dapple-grey horses, which would be enough, as nobody had more than two horses to a carriage in town, and for which he paid 312 crowns—a very low price, he thought, at a season when every one was purchasing. He engaged good and experienced coachmen at two crowns a month, and; in short, made all necessary arrangements for their comfort and the honour of the state.

The King had been growing more and more displeased at the tardiness of the commission, petulantly ascribing it to a design on the part of the States to “excuse themselves from sharing in his bold conceptions,” but said that “he could resolve on nothing without My Lords the States, who were the only power with which he could contract confidently, as mighty enough and experienced enough to execute the designs to be proposed to them; so that his army was lying useless on his hands until the commissioners arrived,” and lamented more loudly than ever that Barneveld was not coming with them. He was now rejoiced, however, to hear that they would soon arrive, and went in person to the Hotel Gondy to see that everything was prepared in a manner befitting their dignity and comfort.

His anxiety had moreover been increased, as already stated, by the alarming reports from Utrecht and by his other private accounts from the Netherlands.

De Russy expressed in his despatches grave doubts whether the States would join the king in a war against the King of Spain, because they feared the disapprobation of the King of Great Britain, “who had already manifested but too much jealousy of the power and grandeur of the Republic.” Pecquius asserted that the Archdukes had received assurances from the States that they would do nothing to violate the truce. The Prince of Anhalt, who, as chief of the army of the confederated princes, was warm in his demonstrations for a general war by taking advantage of the Cleve expedition, was entirely at cross purposes with the States’ ambassador in Paris, Aerssens maintaining that the forty-three years’ experience in their war justified the States in placing no dependence on German princes except with express conventions. They had no such conventions now, and if they should be attacked by Spain in consequence of their assistance in the Cleve business, what guarantee of aid had they from those whom Anhalt represented? Anhalt was loud in expressions of sympathy with Henry’s designs against Spain, but said that he and the States meant a war of thirty or forty years, while the princes would finish what they meant to do in one.



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A more erroneous expression of opinion, when viewed in the light of subsequent events, could hardly have been hazarded. Villeroy made as good use as he could of these conversations to excite jealousy between the princes and the States for the furtherance of his own ends, while affecting warm interest in the success of the King's projects.

Meantime Archduke Albert had replied manfully and distinctly to the menaces of the King and to the pathetic suggestions made by Villeroy to Pecquius as to a device for sending back the Princess. Her stay at Brussels being the chief cause of the impending war, it would be better, he said, to procure a divorce or to induce the Constable to obtain the consent of the Prince to the return of his wife to her father's house. To further either of these expedients, the Archduke would do his best. "But if one expects by bravados and threats," he added, "to force us to do a thing against our promise, and therefore against reason, our reputation, and honour, resolutely we will do nothing of the kind. And if the said Lord King decided on account of this misunderstanding for a rupture and to make war upon us, we will do our best to wage war on him. In such case, however, we shall be obliged to keep the Princess closer in our own house, and probably to send her to such parts as may be most convenient in order to remove from us an instrument of the infinite evils which this war will produce."

Meantime the special commissioners whom we left at Arras had now entered the French kingdom.

On the 17th April, Aerssens with his three coaches met them on their entrance into Amiens, having been waiting there for them eight days. As they passed through the gate, they found a guard of soldiers drawn up to receive them with military honours, and an official functionary to apologize for the necessary absence of the governor, who had gone with most of the troops stationed in the town to the rendezvous in Champagne. He expressed regret, therefore, that the King's orders for their solemn reception could not be literally carried out. The whole board of magistrates, however, in their costumes of ceremony, with sergeants bearing silver maces marching before them, came forth to bid the ambassadors welcome. An advocate made a speech in the name of the city authorities, saying that they were expressly charged by the King to receive them as coming from his very best friends, and to do them all honour. He extolled the sage government of their High Mightinesses and the valour of the Republic, which had become known to the whole world by the successful conduct of their long and mighty war.

The commissioners replied in words of compliment, and the magistrates then offered them, according to ancient usage, several bottles of hippocras.

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Next day, sending back the carriages of the Prince of Orange, in which they had thus far performed the journey, they set forth towards Paris, reaching Saint-Denis at noon of the third day. Here they were met by de Bonoel, introducer of ambassadors, sent thither by the King to give them welcome, and to say that they would be received on the road by the Duke of Vendome, eldest of the legitimized children of the King. Accordingly before reaching the Saint-Denis gate of Paris, a splendid cavalcade of nearly five hundred noblemen met them, the Duke at their head, accompanied by two marshals of France, de Brissac and Boisdaulphin. The three instantly dismounted, and the ambassadors alighted from their coach. The Duke then gave them solemn and cordial welcome, saying that he had been sent by his father the King to receive them as befitted envoys of the best and most faithful friends he possessed in the world.

The ambassadors expressed their thanks for the great and extraordinary honour thus conferred on them, and they were then requested to get into a royal carriage which had been sent out for that purpose. After much ceremonious refusal they at last consented and, together with the Duke of Vendome, drove through Paris in that vehicle into the Faubourg Saint Germain. Arriving at the Hotel Gondy, they were, notwithstanding all their protestations, escorted up the staircase into the apartments by the Duke.

“This honour is notable,” said the commissioners in their report to the States, “and never shown to anyone before, so that our ill-wishers are filled with spite.”

And Peter Pecquius was of the same opinion. “Everyone is grumbling here,” about the reception of the States’ ambassadors, “because such honours were never paid to any ambassador whatever, whether from Spain, England, or any other country.”

And there were many men living and employed in great affairs of State, both in France and in the Republic—the King and Villeroy, Barneveld and Maurice—who could remember how twenty-six years before a solemn embassy from the States had proceeded from the Hague to France to offer the sovereignty of their country to Henry’s predecessor, had been kept ignominiously and almost like prisoners four weeks long in Rouen, and had been thrust back into the Netherlands without being admitted even to one audience by the monarch. Truly time, in the course of less than one generation of mankind, had worked marvellous changes in the fortunes of the Dutch Republic.

President Jeannin came to visit them next day, with friendly proffers of service, and likewise the ambassador of Venice and the charge d’affaires of Great Britain.

On the 22nd the royal carriages came by appointment to the Hotel Gondy, and took them for their first audience to the Louvre. They were received at the gate by a guard of honour, drums beating and arms presented, and conducted with the greatest ceremony to an apartment in the palace. Soon afterwards they were ushered into a gallery where the King stood, surrounded by a number of princes and distinguished officers of the crown. These withdrew on the approach of the Netherlanders, leaving the King

standing alone. They made their reverence, and Henry saluted them all with respectful cordiality. Begging them to put on their hats again, he listened attentively to their address.

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The language of the discourse now pronounced was similar in tenour to that almost contemporaneously held by the States' special envoys in London. Both documents, when offered afterwards in writing, bore the unmistakable imprint of the one hand that guided the whole political machine. In various passages the phraseology was identical, and, indeed, the Advocate had prepared and signed the instructions for both embassies on the same day.

The commissioners acknowledged in the strongest possible terms the great and constant affection, quite without example, that Henry had manifested to the Netherlands during the whole course of their war. They were at a loss to find language adequately to express their gratitude for that friendship, and the assistance subsequently afforded them in the negotiations for truce. They apologized for the tardiness of the States in sending this solemn embassy of thanksgiving, partly on the ground of the delay in receiving the ratifications from Spain, partly by the protracted contraventions by the Archdukes of certain articles in the treaty, but principally by the terrible disasters occasioned throughout their country by the great inundations, and by the commotions in the city of Utrecht, which had now been "so prudently and happily pacified."

They stated that the chief cause of their embassy was to express their respectful gratitude, and to say that never had prince or state treasured more deeply in memory benefits received than did their republic the favours of his Majesty, or could be more disposed to do their utmost to defend his Majesty's person, crown, or royal family against all attack. They expressed their joy that the King had with prudence, and heroic courage undertaken the defence of the just rights of Brandenburg and Neuburg to the duchies of Cleve, Julich, and the other dependent provinces. Thus had he put an end to the presumption of those who thought they could give the law to all the world. They promised the co-operation of the States in this most important enterprise of their ally, notwithstanding their great losses in the war just concluded, and the diminution of revenue occasioned by the inundations by which they had been afflicted; for they were willing neither to tolerate so unjust an usurpation as that attempted by the Emperor nor to fail to second his Majesty in his generous designs. They observed also that they had been instructed to enquire whether his Majesty would not approve the contracting of a strict league of mutual assistance between France, England, the United Provinces, and the princes of Germany.



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The King, having listened with close attention, thanked the envoys in words of earnest and vigorous cordiality for their expressions of affection to himself. He begged them to remember that he had always been their good friend, and that he never would forsake them; that he had always hated the Spaniards, and should ever hate them; and that the affairs of Julich must be arranged not only for the present but for the future. He requested them to deliver their propositions in writing to him, and to be ready to put themselves into communication with the members of his council, in order that they might treat with each other roundly and without reserve. He should always deal with the Netherlanders as with his own people, keeping no back-door open, but pouring out everything as into the lap of his best and most trusty friends.

After this interview conferences followed daily between the ambassadors and Villeroy, Sully, Jeannin, the Chancellor, and Puysieug.

The King's counsellors, after having read the written paraphrase of Barneveld's instructions, the communication of which followed their oral statements, and which, among other specifications, contained a respectful remonstrance against the projected French East India Company, as likely to benefit the Spaniards only, while seriously injuring the States, complained that "the representations were too general, and that the paper seemed to contain nothing but compliments."

The ambassadors, dilating on the various points and articles, maintained warmly that there was much more than compliments in their instructions. The ministers wished to know what the States practically were prepared to do in the affair of Cleve, which they so warmly and encouragingly recommended to the King. They asked whether the States' army would march at once to Dusseldorf to protect the princes at the moment when the King moved from Mezieres, and they made many enquiries as to what amount of supplies and munitions they could depend upon from the States' magazines.

The envoys said that they had no specific instructions on these points, and could give therefore no conclusive replies. More than ever did Henry regret the absence of the great Advocate at this juncture. If he could have come, with the bridle on his neck, as Henry had so repeatedly urged upon the resident ambassador, affairs might have marched more rapidly. The despotic king could never remember that Barneveld was not the unlimited sovereign of the United States, but only the seal-keeper of one of the seven provinces and the deputy of Holland to the General Assembly. His indirect power, however vast, was only great because it was so carefully veiled.

It was then proposed by Villeroy and Sully, and agreed to by the commissioners, that M. de Bethune, a relative of the great financier, should be sent forthwith to the Hague, to confer privately with Prince Maurice and Barneveld especially, as to military details of the coming campaign.



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It was also arranged that the envoys should delay their departure until de Bethune's return. Meantime Henry and the Nuncius had been exchanging plain and passionate language. Ubaldini reproached the King with disregarding all the admonitions of his Holiness, and being about to plunge Christendom into misery and war for the love of the Princess of Conde. He held up to him the enormity of thus converting the King of Spain and the Archdukes into his deadly enemies, and warned him that he would by such desperate measures make even the States-General and the King of Britain his foes, who certainly would never favour such schemes. The King replied that "he trusted to his own forces, not to those of his neighbours, and even if the Hollanders should not declare for him still he would execute his designs. On the 15th of May most certainly he would put himself at the head of his army, even if he was obliged to put off the Queen's coronation till October, and he could not consider the King of Spain nor the Archdukes his friends unless they at once made him some demonstration of friendship. Being asked by the Nuncius what demonstration he wished, he answered flatly that he wished the Princess to be sent back to the Constable her father, in which case the affair of Julich could be arranged amicably, and, at all events, if the war continued there, he need not send more than 4000 men."

Thus, in spite of his mighty preparations, vehement demands for Barneveld, and profound combinations revealed to that statesman, to Aerssens, and to the Duke of Sully only, this wonderful monarch was ready to drop his sword on the spot, to leave his friends in the lurch, to embrace his enemies, the Archduke first of all, instead of bombarding Brussels the very next week, as he had been threatening to do, provided the beautiful Margaret could be restored to his arms through those of her venerable father.

He suggested to the Nuncius his hope that the Archduke would yet be willing to wink at her escape, which he was now trying to arrange through de Preaux at Brussels, while Ubaldini, knowing the Archduke incapable of anything so dishonourable, felt that the war was inevitable.

At the very same time too, Father Cotton, who was only too ready to betray the secrets of the confessional when there was an object to gain, had a long conversation with the Archduke's ambassador, in which the holy man said that the King had confessed to him that he made the war expressly to cause the Princess to be sent back to France, so that as there could be no more doubt on the subject the father-confessor begged Pecquius, in order to prevent so great an evil, to devise "some prompt and sudden means to induce his Highness the Archduke to order the Princess to retire secretly to her own country." The Jesuit had different notions of honour, reputation, and duty from those which influenced the Archduke. He added that "at Easter the King had been so well disposed to seek his salvation that he could easily

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have forgotten his affection for the Princess, had she not rekindled the fire by her letters, in which she caressed him with amorous epithets, calling him 'my heart,' 'my chevalier,' and similar terms of endearment." Father Cotton also drew up a paper, which he secretly conveyed to Pecquius, "to prove that the Archduke, in terms of conscience and honour, might decide to permit this escape, but he most urgently implored the Ambassador that for the love of God and the public good he would influence his Serene Highness to prevent this from ever coming to the knowledge of the world, but to keep the secret inviolably."

Thus, while Henry was holding high council with his own most trusted advisers, and with the most profound statesmen of Europe, as to the opening campaign within a fortnight of a vast and general war, he was secretly plotting with his father-confessor to effect what he avowed to be the only purpose of that war, by Jesuitical bird-lime to be applied to the chief of his antagonists. Certainly Barneveld and his colleagues were justified in their distrust. To move one step in advance of their potent but slippery ally might be a step off a precipice.

On the 1st of May, Sully made a long visit to the commissioners. He earnestly urged upon them the necessity of making the most of the present opportunity. There were people in plenty, he said, who would gladly see the King take another course, for many influential persons about him were altogether Spanish in their inclinations.

The King had been scandalized to hear from the Prince of Anhalt, without going into details, that on his recent passage through the Netherlands he had noticed some change of feeling, some coolness in their High Mightinesses. The Duke advised that they should be very heedful, that they should remember how much more closely these matters regarded them than anyone else, that they should not deceive themselves, but be firmly convinced that unless they were willing to go head foremost into the business the French would likewise not commit themselves. Sully spoke with much earnestness and feeling, for it was obvious that both he and his master had been disappointed at the cautious and limited nature of the instructions given to the ambassadors.

An opinion had indeed prevailed, and, as we have seen, was to a certain extent shared in by Aerssens, and even by Sully himself, that the King's military preparations were after all but a feint, and that if the Prince of Conde, and with him the Princess, could be restored to France, the whole war cloud would evaporate in smoke.



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It was even asserted that Henry had made a secret treaty with the enemy, according to which, while apparently ready to burst upon the House of Austria with overwhelming force, he was in reality about to shake hands cordially with that power, on condition of being allowed to incorporate into his own kingdom the very duchies in dispute, and of receiving the Prince of Conde and his wife from Spain. He was thus suspected of being about to betray his friends and allies in the most ignoble manner and for the vilest of motives. The circulation of these infamous reports no doubt paralysed for a time the energy of the enemy who had made no requisite preparations against the threatened invasion, but it sickened his friends with vague apprehensions, while it cut the King himself to the heart and infuriated him to madness.

He asked the Nuncius one day what people thought in Rome and Italy of the war about to be undertaken. Ubaldini replied that those best informed considered the Princess of Conde as the principal subject of hostilities; they thought that he meant to have her back. "I do mean to have her back," cried Henry, with a mighty oath, and foaming with rage, "and I shall have her back. No one shall prevent it, not even the Lieutenant of God on earth."

But the imputation of this terrible treason weighed upon his mind and embittered every hour.

The commissioners assured Sully that they had no knowledge of any coolness or change such as Anhalt had reported on the part of their principals, and the Duke took his leave.

It will be remembered that Villeroy had, it was thought, been making mischief between Anhalt and the States by reporting and misreporting private conversations between that Prince and the Dutch ambassador.

As soon as Sully had gone, van der Myle waited upon Villeroy to ask, in name of himself and colleagues, for audience of leave-taking, the object of their mission having been accomplished. The Secretary of State, too, like Sully, urged the importance of making the most of the occasion. The affair of Cleve, he said, did not very much concern the King, but his Majesty had taken it to heart chiefly on account of the States and for their security. They were bound, therefore, to exert themselves to the utmost, but more would not be required of them than it would be possible to fulfil.

Van der Myle replied that nothing would be left undone by their High Mightinesses to support the King faithfully and according to their promise.

On the 5th, Villeroy came to the ambassadors, bringing with him a letter from the King for the States-General, and likewise a written reply to the declarations made orally and in writing by the ambassadors to his Majesty.

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The letter of Henry to “his very dear and good friends, allies, and confederates,” was chiefly a complimentary acknowledgment of the expressions of gratitude made to him on part of the States-General, and warm approbation of their sage resolve to support the cause of Brandenburg and Neuburg. He referred them for particulars to the confidential conferences held between the commissioners and himself. They would state how important he thought it that this matter should be settled now so thoroughly as to require no second effort at any future time when circumstances might not be so propitious; and that he intended to risk his person, at the head of his army, to accomplish this result.

To the ambassadors he expressed his high satisfaction at their assurances of affection, devotion, and gratitude on the part of the States. He approved and commended their resolution to assist the Elector and the Palatine in the affair of the duchies. He considered this a proof of their prudence and good judgment, as showing their conviction that they were more interested and bound to render this assistance than any other potentates or states, as much from the convenience and security to be derived from the neighbourhood of princes who were their friends as from dangers to be apprehended from other princes who were seeking to appropriate those provinces. The King therefore begged the States to move forward as soon as possible the forces which they offered for this enterprise according to his Majesty’s suggestion sent through de Bethune. The King on his part would do the same with extreme care and diligence, from the anxiety he felt to prevent My Lords the States from receiving detriment in places so vital to their preservation.

He begged the States likewise to consider that it was meet not only to make a first effort to put the princes into entire possession of the duchies, but to provide also for the durable success of the enterprise; to guard against any invasions that might be made in the future to eject those princes. Otherwise all their present efforts would be useless; and his Majesty therefore consented on this occasion to enter into the new league proposed by the States with all the princes and states mentioned in the memoir of the ambassadors for mutual assistance against all unjust occupations, attempts, and baneful intrigues.

Having no special information as to the infractions by the Archdukes of the recent treaty of truce, the King declined to discuss that subject for the moment, although holding himself bound to all required of him as one of the guarantees of that treaty.

In regard to the remonstrance made by the ambassadors concerning the trade of the East Indies, his Majesty disclaimed any intention of doing injury to the States in permitting his subjects to establish a company in his kingdom for that commerce. He had deferred hitherto taking action in the matter only out of respect to the States, but he could no longer refuse the just claims of his subjects if they should persist in them as urgently as they had thus far been doing. The right and liberty which they demanded

was common to all, said the King, and he was certainly bound to have as great care for the interests of his subjects as for those of his friends and allies.

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Here, certainly, was an immense difference in tone and in terms towards the Republic adopted respectively by their great and good friends and allies the Kings of France and Great Britain. It was natural enough that Henry, having secretly expressed his most earnest hope that the States would move at his side in his broad and general assault upon the House of Austria, should impress upon them his conviction, which was a just one, that no power in the world was more interested in keeping a Spanish and Catholic prince out of the duchies than they were themselves. But while thus taking a bond of them as it were for the entire fulfilment of the primary enterprise, he accepted with cordiality, and almost with gratitude, their proposition of a close alliance of the Republic with himself and with the Protestant powers which James had so superciliously rejected.

It would have been difficult to inflict a more petty and, more studied insult upon the Republic than did the King of Great Britain at that supreme moment by his preposterous claim of sovereign rights over the Netherlands. He would make no treaty with them, he said, but should he find it worth while to treat with his royal brother of France, he should probably not shut the door in their faces.

Certainly Henry's reply to the remonstrances of the ambassadors in regard to the India trade was as moderate as that of James had been haughty and peremptory in regard to the herring fishery. It is however sufficiently amusing to see those excellent Hollanders nobly claiming that "the sea was as free as air" when the right to take Scotch pilchards was in question, while at the very same moment they were earnest for excluding their best allies and all the world besides from their East India monopoly. But Isaac Le Maire and Jacques Le Roy had not lain so long disguised in Zamet's house in Paris for nothing, nor had Aerssens so completely "broke the neck of the French East India Company" as he supposed. A certain Dutch freebooter, however, Simon Danzer by name, a native of Dordrecht, who had been alternately in the service of Spain, France, and the States, but a general marauder upon all powers, was exercising at that moment perhaps more influence on the East India trade than any potentate or commonwealth.

He kept the seas just then with four swift-sailing and well-armed vessels, that potent skimmer of the ocean, and levied tribute upon Protestant and Catholic, Turk or Christian, with great impartiality. The King of Spain had sent him letters of amnesty and safe-conduct, with large pecuniary offers, if he would enter his service. The King of France had outbid his royal brother and enemy, and implored him to sweep the seas under the white flag.



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The States' ambassador begged his masters to reflect whether this "puissant and experienced corsair" should be permitted to serve Spaniard or Frenchman, and whether they could devise no expedient for turning him into another track. "He is now with his fine ships at Marseilles," said Aerssens. "He is sought for in all quarters by the Spaniard and by the directors of the new French East India Company, private persons who equip vessels of war. If he is not satisfied with this king's offers, he is likely to close with the King of Spain, who offers him 1000 crowns a month. Avarice tickles him, but he is neither Spaniard nor Papist, and I fear will be induced to serve with his ships the East India Company, and so will return to his piracy, the evil of which will always fall on our heads. If My Lords the States will send me letters of abolition for him, in imitation of the French king, on condition of his returning to his home in Zealand and quitting the sea altogether, something might be done. Otherwise he will be off to Marseilles again, and do more harm to us than ever. Isaac Le Maire is doing as much evil as he can, and one holds daily council with him here."

Thus the slippery Simon skimmed the seas from Marseilles to the Moluccas, from Java to Mexico, never to be held firmly by Philip, or Henry, or Barneveld. A dissolute but very daring ship's captain, born in Zealand, and formerly in the service of the States, out of which he had been expelled for many evil deeds, Simon Danzer had now become a professional pirate, having his head-quarters chiefly at Algiers. His English colleague Warde stationed himself mainly at Tunis, and both acted together in connivance with the pachas of the Turkish government. They with their considerable fleet, one vessel of which mounted sixty guns, were the terror of the Mediterranean, extorted tribute from the commerce of all nations indifferently, and sold licenses to the greatest governments of Europe. After growing rich with his accumulated booty, Simon was inclined to become respectable, a recourse which was always open to him—France, England, Spain, the United Provinces, vieing with each other to secure him by high rank and pay as an honoured member of their national marine. He appears however to have failed in his plan of retiring upon his laurels, having been stabbed in Paris by a man whom he had formerly robbed and ruined.

Villeroy, having delivered the letters with his own hands to the ambassadors, was asked by them when and where it would be convenient for the King to arrange the convention of close alliance. The Secretary of State—in his secret heart anything but kindly disposed for this loving union with a republic he detested and with heretics whom he would have burned—answered briefly that his Majesty was ready at any time, and that it might take place then if they were provided with the necessary powers. He said in parting that the States should "have an eye to everything, for occasions like the present were irrecoverable." He then departed, saying that the King would receive them in final audience on the following day.



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Next morning accordingly Marshal de Boisdaulphin and de Bonoeil came with royal coaches to the Hotel Gondy and escorted the ambassadors to the Louvre. On the way they met de Bethune, who had returned solo from the Hague bringing despatches for the King and for themselves. While in the antechamber, they had opportunity to read their letters from the States-General, his Majesty sending word that he was expecting them with impatience, but preferred that they should read the despatches before the audience.

They found the King somewhat out of humour. He expressed himself as tolerably well satisfied with the general tenour of the despatches brought by de Bethune, but complained loudly of the request now made by the States, that the maintenance and other expenses of 4000 French in the States' service should be paid in the coming campaign out of the royal exchequer. He declared that this proposition was "a small manifestation of ingratitude," that my Lords the, States were "little misers," and that such proceedings were "little avaricious tricks" such as he had not expected of them.

So far as England was concerned, he said there was a great difference. The English took away what he was giving. He did cheerfully a great deal for his friends, he said, and was always ready doubly to repay what they did for him. If, however, the States persisted in this course, he should call his troops home again.

The King, as he went on, became more and more excited, and showed decided dissatisfaction in his language and manner. It was not to be wondered at, for we have seen how persistently he had been urging that the Advocate should come in person with "the bridle on his neck," and now he had sent his son-in-law and two colleagues tightly tied up by stringent instructions. And over an above all this, while he was contemplating a general war with intention to draw upon the States for unlimited supplies, behold, they were haggling for the support of a couple of regiments which were virtually their own troops.

There were reasons, however, for this cautiousness besides those unfounded, although not entirely chimerical, suspicions as to the King's good faith, to which we have alluded. It should not be forgotten that, although Henry had conversed secretly with the States' ambassador at full length on his far-reaching plans, with instructions that he should confidentially inform the Advocate and demand his co-operation, not a word of it had been officially propounded to the States-General, nor to the special embassy with whom he was now negotiating. No treaty of alliance offensive or defensive existed between the Kingdom and the Republic or between the Republic and any power whatever. It would have been culpable carelessness therefore at this moment for the prime minister of the States to have committed his government in writing to a full participation in a general assault upon the House of Austria; the first step in which would have been a breach of the treaty just concluded and instant hostilities with the Archdukes Albert and Isabella.

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That these things were in the immediate future was as plain as that night would follow day, but the hour had not yet struck for the States to throw down the gauntlet.

Hardly two months before, the King, in his treaty with the princes at Hall, had excluded both the King of Great Britain and the States-General from participation in those arrangements, and it was grave matter for consideration, therefore, for the States whether they should allow such succour as they might choose to grant the princes to be included in the French contingent. The opportunity for treating as a sovereign power with the princes and making friends with them was tempting, but it did not seem reasonable to the States that France should make use of them in this war without a treaty, and should derive great advantage from the alliance, but leave the expense to them.

Henry, on the other hand, forgetting, when it was convenient to him, all about the Princess of Conde, his hatred of Spain, and his resolution to crush the House of Austria, chose to consider the war as made simply for the love of the States-General and to secure them for ever from danger.

The ambassadors replied to the King's invectives with great respect, and endeavoured to appease his anger. They had sent a special despatch to their government, they said, in regard to all those matters, setting forth all the difficulties that had been raised, but had not wished to trouble his Majesty with premature discussions of them. They did not doubt, however, that their High Mightinesses would so conduct this great affair as to leave the King no ground of complaint.

Henry then began to talk of the intelligence brought by de Bethune from the Hague, especially in regard to the sending of States' troops to Dusseldorf and the supply of food for the French army. He did not believe, he said, that the Archdukes would refuse him the passage with his forces through their territory, inasmuch as the States' army would be on the way to meet him. In case of any resistance, however, he declared his resolution to strike his blow and to cause people to talk of him. He had sent his quartermaster-general to examine the passes, who had reported that it would be impossible to prevent his Majesty's advance. He was also distinctly informed that Marquis Spinola, keeping his places garrisoned, could not bring more than 8000 men into the field. The Duke of Bouillon, however, was sending advices that his communications were liable to be cut off, and that for this purpose Spinola could set on foot about 16,000 infantry and 4000 horse.

If the passage should be allowed by the Archdukes, the King stated his intention of establishing magazines for his troops along the whole line of march through the Spanish Netherlands and neighbouring districts, and to establish and fortify himself everywhere in order to protect his supplies and cover his possible retreat. He was still in doubt, he said, whether to demand the passage at once or to wait until he had begun to move his

army. He was rather inclined to make the request instantly in order to gain time, being persuaded that he should receive no answer either of consent or refusal.



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Leaving all these details, the King then frankly observed that the affair of Cleve had a much wider outlook than people thought. Therefore the States must consider well what was to be done to secure the whole work as soon as the Cleve business had been successfully accomplished. Upon this subject it was indispensable that he should consult especially with his Excellency (Prince Maurice) and some members of the General Assembly, whom he wished that My Lords the States-General should depute to the army.

“For how much good will it do,” said the King, “if we drive off Archduke Leopold without establishing the princes in security for the future? Nothing is easier than to put the princes in possession. Every one will yield or run away before our forces, but two months after we have withdrawn the enemy will return and drive the princes out again. I cannot always be ready to spring out of my kingdom, nor to assemble such great armies. I am getting old, and my army moreover costs me 400,000 crowns a month, which is enough to exhaust all the treasures of France, Spain, Venice, and the States-General together.”

He added that, if the present occasion were neglected, the States would afterwards bitterly lament and never recover it. The Pope was very much excited, and was sending out his ambassadors everywhere. Only the previous Saturday the new nuncius destined for France had left Rome. If My Lords the States would send deputies to the camp with full powers, he stood there firm and unchangeable, but if they remained cool in the business, he warned them that they would enrage him.

The States must seize the occasion, he repeated. It was bald behind, and must be grasped by the forelock. It was not enough to have begun well. One must end well. “Finis coronat opus.” It was very easy to speak of a league, but a league was not to be made in order to sit with arms tied, but to do good work. The States ought not to suffer that the Germans should prove themselves more energetic, more courageous, than themselves.

And again the King vehemently urged the necessity of his Excellency and some deputies of the States coming to him “with absolute power” to treat. He could not doubt in that event of something solid being accomplished.

“There are three things,” he continued, “which cause me to speak freely. I am talking with my friends whom I hold dear—yes, dearer, perhaps, than they hold themselves. I am a great king, and say what I choose to say. I am old, and know by experience the ways of this world’s affairs. I tell you, then, that it is most important that you should come to me resolved and firm on all points.”

He then requested the ambassadors to make full report of all that he had said to their masters, to make the journey as rapidly as possible, in order to encourage the States to

the great enterprise and to meet his wishes. He required from them, he said, not only activity of the body, but labour of the intellect.



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He was silent for a few moments, and then spoke again. "I shall not always be here," he said, "nor will you always have Prince Maurice, and a few others whose knowledge of your commonwealth is perfect. My Lords the States must be up and doing while they still possess them. Nest Tuesday I shall cause the Queen to be crowned at Saint-Denis; the following Thursday she will make her entry into Paris. Next day, Friday, I shall take my departure. At the end of this month I shall cross the Meuse at Mezieres or in that neighbourhood."

He added that he should write immediately to Holland, to urge upon his Excellency and the States to be ready to make the junction of their army with his forces without delay. He charged the ambassadors to assure their High Mightinesses that he was and should remain their truest friend, their dearest neighbour. He then said a few gracious and cordial words to each of them, warmly embraced each, and bade them all farewell.

The next day was passed by the ambassadors in paying and receiving farewell visits, and on Saturday, the 8th, they departed from Paris, being escorted out of the gate by the Marshal de Boisdaulphin, with a cavalcade of noblemen. They slept that night at Saint Denis, and then returned to Holland by the way of Calais and Rotterdam, reaching the Hague on the 16th of May.

I make no apology for the minute details thus given of the proceedings of this embassy, and especially of the conversations of Henry.

The very words of those conversations were taken down on the spot by the commissioners who heard them, and were carefully embodied in their report made to the States-General on their return, from which I have transcribed them.

It was a memorable occasion. The great king—for great he was, despite his numerous vices and follies—stood there upon the threshold of a vast undertaking, at which the world, still half incredulous, stood gazing, half sick with anxiety. He relied on his own genius and valour chiefly, and after these on the brain of Barneveld and the sword of Maurice. Nor was his confidence misplaced.

But let the reader observe the date of the day when those striking utterances were made, and which have never before been made public. It was Thursday, the 6th May. "I shall not always be here," said the King "I cannot be ready at any moment to spring out of my kingdom." . . . "Friday of next week I take my departure."

How much of heroic pathos in Henry's attitude at this supreme moment! How mournfully ring those closing words of his address to the ambassadors!

The die was cast. A letter drawn up by the Duc de Sully was sent to Archduke Albert by the King.



“My brother,” he said; “Not being able to refuse my best allies and confederates the help which they have asked of me against those who wish to trouble them in the succession to the duchies and counties of Cleve, Julich, Mark, Berg, Ravensberg, and Ravenstein, I am advancing towards them with my army. As my road leads me through your country, I desire to notify you thereof, and to know whether or not I am to enter as a friend or enemy.”



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Such was the draft as delivered to the Secretary of State; “and as such it was sent,” said Sully, “unless Villeroy changed it, as he had a great desire to do.”

Henry was mistaken in supposing that the Archduke would leave the letter without an answer. A reply was sent in due time, and the permission demanded was not refused. For although France was now full of military movement, and the regiments everywhere were hurrying hourly to the places of rendezvous, though the great storm at last was ready to burst, the Archdukes made no preparations for resistance, and lapped themselves in fatal security that nothing was intended but an empty demonstration.

Six thousand Swiss newly levied, with 20,000 French infantry and 6000 horse, were waiting for Henry to place himself at their head at Mezieres. Twelve thousand foot and 2000 cavalry, including the French and English contingents—a splendid army, led by Prince Maurice—were ready to march from Holland to Dusseldorf. The army of the princes under Prince Christian of Anhalt numbered 10,000 men. The last scruples of the usually unscrupulous Charles Emmanuel had been overcome, and the Duke was quite ready to act, 25,000 strong, with Marshal de Lesdiguieres, in the Milanese; while Marshal de la Force was already at the head of his forces in the Pyrenees, amounting to 12,000 foot and 2000 horse.

Sully had already despatched his splendid trains of artillery to the frontier. “Never was seen in France, and perhaps never will be seen there again, artillery more complete and better furnished,” said the Duke, thinking probably that artillery had reached the climax of perfect destructiveness in the first decade of the seventeenth century.

His son, the Marquis de Rosny, had received the post of grand master of artillery, and placed himself at its head. His father was to follow as its chief, carrying with him as superintendent of finance a cash-box of eight millions.

The King had appointed his wife, Mary de' Medici, regent, with an eminent council.

The new nuncius had been requested to present himself with his letters of credence in the camp. Henry was unwilling that he should enter Paris, being convinced that he came to do his best, by declamation, persuasion, and intrigue, to paralyse the enterprise. Sully's promises to Ubaldini, the former nuncius, that his Holiness should be made king, however flattering to Paul V., had not prevented his representatives from vigorously denouncing Henry's monstrous scheme to foment heresy and encourage rebellion.

The King's chagrin at the cautious limitations imposed upon the States' special embassy was, so he hoped, to be removed by full conferences in the camp. Certainly he had shown in the most striking manner the respect he felt for the States, and the confidence he reposed in them.

“In the reception of your embassy,” wrote Aerssens to the Advocate, “certainly the King has so loosened the strap of his affection that he has reserved nothing by which he could put the greatest king in the world above your level.”

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He warned the States, however, that Henry had not found as much in their propositions as the common interest had caused him to promise himself. “Nevertheless he informs me in confidence,” said Aerssens, “that he will engage himself in nothing without you; nay, more, he has expressly told me that he could hardly accomplish his task without your assistance, and it was for our sakes alone that he has put himself into this position and incurred this great expense.”

Some days later he informed Barneveld that he would leave to van der Myle and his colleagues the task of describing the great dissatisfaction of the King at the letters brought by de Bethune. He told him in confidence that the States must equip the French regiments and put them in marching order if they wished to preserve Henry’s friendship. He added that since the departure of the special embassy the King had been vehemently and seriously urging that Prince Maurice, Count Lewis William, Barneveld, and three or four of the most qualified deputies of the States-General, entirely authorized to treat for the common safety, should meet with him in the territory of Julich on a fixed day.

The crisis was reached. The King stood fully armed, thoroughly prepared, with trustworthy allies at his side, disposing of overwhelming forces ready to sweep down with irresistible strength upon the House of Austria, which, as he said and the States said, aspired to give the law to the whole world. Nothing was left to do save, as the Ambassador said, to “uncouple the dogs of war and let them run.”

What preparations had Spain and the Empire, the Pope and the League, set on foot to beat back even for a moment the overwhelming onset? None whatever. Spinola in the Netherlands, Fuentes in Milan, Bucquoy and Lobkowitz and Lichtenstein in Prague, had hardly the forces of a moderate peace establishment at their disposal, and all the powers save France and the States were on the verge of bankruptcy.

Even James of Great Britain—shuddering at the vast thundercloud which had stretched itself over Christendom growing blacker and blacker, precisely at this moment, in which he had proved to his own satisfaction that the peace just made would perpetually endure—even James did not dare to traverse the designs of the king whom he feared, and the republic which he hated, in favour of his dearly loved Spain. Sweden, Denmark, the Hanse Towns, were in harmony with France, Holland, Savoy, and the whole Protestant force of Germany—a majority both in population and resources of the whole empire. What army, what combination, what device, what talisman, could save the House of Austria, the cause of Papacy, from the impending ruin?

A sudden, rapid, conclusive victory for the allies seemed as predestined a result as anything could be in the future of human affairs.



On the 14th or 15th day of May, as he had just been informing the States' ambassadors, Henry meant to place himself at the head of his army. That was the moment fixed by himself for "taking his departure."



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And now the ides of May had come—but not gone.

In the midst of all the military preparations with which Paris had been resounding, the arrangements for the Queen's coronation had been simultaneously going forward. Partly to give check in advance to the intrigues which would probably at a later date be made by Conde, supported by the power of Spain, to invalidate the legitimacy of the Dauphin, but more especially perhaps to further and to conceal what the faithful Sully called the "damnable artifices" of the Queen's intimate councillors—sinister designs too dark to be even whispered at that epoch, and of which history, during the lapse of more than two centuries and a half, has scarcely dared to speak above its breath—it was deemed all important that the coronation should take place.

A certain astrologer, Thomassin by name, was said to have bidden the King to beware the middle of the next month of May. Henry had tweaked the soothsayer by the beard and made him dance twice or thrice about the room. To the Duc de Vendome expressing great anxiety in regard to Thomassin, Henry replied, "The astrologer is an old fool, and you are a young fool." A certain prophetess called Pasithea had informed the Queen that the King could not survive his fifty-seventh year. She was much in the confidence of Mary de' Medici, who had insisted this year on her returning to Paris. Henry, who was ever chafing and struggling to escape the invisible and dangerous net which he felt closing about him, and who connected the sorceress with all whom he most loathed among the intimate associates of the Queen, swore a mighty oath that she should not show her face again at court. "My heart presages that some signal disaster will befall me on this coronation. Concini and his wife are urging the Queen obstinately to send for this fanatic. If she should come, there is no doubt that my wife and I shall squabble well about her. If I discover more about these private plots of hers with Spain, I shall be in a mighty passion." And the King then assured the faithful minister of his conviction that all the jealousy affected by the Queen in regard to the Princess of Conde was but a veil to cover dark designs. It was necessary in the opinion of those who governed her, the vile Concini and his wife, that there should be some apparent and flagrant cause of quarrel. The public were to receive payment in these pretexts for want of better coin. Henry complained that even Sully and all the world besides attributed to jealousy that which was really the effect of a most refined malice.

And the minister sometimes pauses in the midst of these revelations made in his old age, and with self-imposed and shuddering silence intimates that there are things he could tell which are too odious and dreadful to be breathed.

Henry had an invincible repugnance to that coronation on which the Queen had set her heart. Nothing could be more pathetic than the isolated position in which he found himself, standing thus as he did on the threshold of a mighty undertaking in which he was the central figure, an object for the world to gaze upon with palpitating interest. At his hearth in the Louvre were no household gods. Danger lurked behind every tapestry

in that magnificent old palace. A nameless dread dogged his footsteps through those resounding corridors.



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And by an exquisite refinement in torture the possible father of several of his children not only dictated to the Queen perpetual outbreaks of frantic jealousy against her husband, but moved her to refuse with suspicion any food and drink offered her by his hands. The Concini's would even with unparalleled and ingenious effrontery induce her to make use of the kitchen arrangements in their apartments for the preparation of her daily meals?

Driven from house and home, Henry almost lived at the Arsenal. There he would walk for hours in the long alleys of the garden, discussing with the great financier and soldier his vast, dreamy, impracticable plans. Strange combination of the hero, the warrior, the voluptuary, the sage, and the schoolboy—it would be difficult to find in the whole range of history a more human, a more attractive, a more provoking, a less venerable character.

Haunted by omens, dire presentiments, dark suspicions with and without cause, he was especially averse from the coronation to which in a moment of weakness he had given his consent.

Sitting in Sully's cabinet, in a low chair which the Duke had expressly provided for his use, tapping and drumming on his spectacle case, or starting up and smiting himself on the thigh, he would pour out his soul hours long to his one confidential minister. "Ah, my friend, how this sacrament displeases me," he said; "I know not why it is, but my heart tells me that some misfortune is to befall me. By God I shall die in this city, I shall never go out of it; I see very well that they are finding their last resource in my death. Ah, accursed coronation! thou wilt be the, cause of my death."

So many times did he give utterance to these sinister forebodings that Sully implored him at last for leave to countermand the whole ceremony notwithstanding the great preparations which had been made for the splendid festival. "Yes, yes," replied the King, "break up this coronation at once. Let me hear no more of it. Then I shall have my mind cured of all these impressions. I shall leave the town and fear nothing."

He then informed his friend that he had received intimations that he should lose his life at the first magnificent festival he should give, and that he should die in a carriage. Sully admitted that he had often, when in a carriage with him, been amazed at his starting and crying out at the slightest shock, having so often seen him intrepid among guns and cannon, pikes and naked swords.

The Duke went to the Queen three days in succession, and with passionate solicitations and arguments and almost upon his knees implored her to yield to the King's earnest desire, and renounce for the time at least the coronation. In vain. Mary de' Medici was obdurate as marble to his prayers.



The coronation was fixed for Thursday, the 13th May, two days later than the time originally appointed when the King conversed with the States' ambassadors. On the following Sunday was to be the splendid and solemn entrance of the crowned Queen. On the Monday, Henry, postponing likewise for two days his original plan of departure, would leave for the army.



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Meantime there were petty annoyances connected with the details of the coronation. Henry had set his heart on having his legitimized children, the offspring of the fair Gabrielle, take their part in the ceremony on an equal footing with the princes of the blood. They were not entitled to wear the lilies of France upon their garments, and the King was solicitous that "the Count"—as Soissons, brother of Prince Conti and uncle of Conde, was always called—should dispense with those ensigns for his wife upon this solemn occasion, and that the other princesses of the blood should do the same. Thus there would be no appearance of inferiority on the part of the Duchess of Vendome.

The Count protested that he would have his eyes torn out of his head rather than submit to an arrangement which would do him so much shame. He went to the Queen and urged upon her that to do this would likewise be an injury to her children, the Dukes of Orleans and of Anjou. He refused flatly to appear or allow his wife to appear except in the costume befitting their station. The King on his part was determined not to abandon his purpose. He tried to gain over the Count by the most splendid proposals, offering him the command of the advance-guard of the army, or the lieutenancy-general of France in the absence of the King, 30,000 crowns for his equipment and an increase of his pension if he would cause his wife to give up the fleurs-de-lys on this occasion. The alternative was to be that, if she insisted upon wearing them, his Majesty would never look upon him again with favourable eyes.

The Count never hesitated, but left Paris, refusing to appear at the ceremony. The King was in a towering passion, for to lose the presence of this great prince of the blood at a solemnity expressly intended as a demonstration against the designs hatching by the first of all the princes of the blood under patronage of Spain was a severe blow to his pride and a check to his policy.'

Yet it was inconceivable that he could at such a moment commit so superfluous and unmeaning a blunder. He had forced Conde into exile, intrigue with the enemy, and rebellion, by open and audacious efforts to destroy his domestic peace, and now he was willing to alienate one of his most powerful subjects in order to place his bastards on a level with royalty. While it is sufficiently amusing to contemplate this proposed barter of a chief command in a great army or the lieutenancy-general of a mighty kingdom at the outbreak of a general European war against a bit of embroidery on the court dress of a lady, yet it is impossible not to recognize something ideal and chivalrous from his own point of view in the refusal of Soissons to renounce those emblems of pure and high descent, those haughty lilies of St. Louis, against any bribes of place and pelf however dazzling.



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The coronation took place on Thursday, 13th May, with the pomp and glitter becoming great court festivals; the more pompous and glittering the more the monarch's heart was wrapped in gloom. The representatives of the great powers were conspicuous in the procession; Aerssens, the Dutch ambassador, holding a foremost place. The ambassadors of Spain and Venice as usual squabbled about precedence and many other things, and actually came to fisticuffs, the fight lasting a long time and ending somewhat to the advantage of the Venetian. But the sacrament was over, and Mary de' Medici was crowned Queen of France and Regent of the Kingdom during the absence of the sovereign with his army.

Meantime there had been mysterious warnings darker and more distinct than the babble of the soothsayer Thomassin or the ravings of the lunatic Pasithea. Count Schomberg, dining at the Arsenal with Sully, had been called out to converse with Mademoiselle de Gournay, who implored that a certain Madame d'Escomans might be admitted to audience of the King. That person, once in direct relations with the Marchioness of Verneuil, the one of Henry's mistresses who most hated him, affirmed that a man from the Duke of Epernon's country was in Paris, agent of a conspiracy seeking the King's life.

The woman not enjoying a very reputable character found it impossible to obtain a hearing, although almost frantic with her desire to save her sovereign's life. The Queen observed that it was a wicked woman, who was accusing all the world, and perhaps would accuse her too.

The fatal Friday came. Henry drove out, in his carriage to see the preparations making for the triumphal entrance of the Queen into Paris on the following Sunday. What need to repeat the tragic, familiar tale? The coach was stopped by apparent accident in the narrow street de la Feronniere, and Francis Ravailac, standing on the wheel, drove his knife through the monarch's heart. The Duke of Epernon, sitting at his side, threw his cloak over the body and ordered the carriage back to the Louvre.

"They have killed him, 'e ammazato,'" cried Concini (so says tradition), thrusting his head into the Queen's bedchamber.

[Michelet, 197. It is not probable that the documents concerning the trial, having been so carefully suppressed from the beginning, especially the confession dictated to Voisin—who wrote it kneeling on the ground, and was perhaps so appalled at its purport that he was afraid to write it legibly—will ever see the light. I add in the Appendix some contemporary letters of persons, as likely as any one to know what could be known, which show how dreadful were the suspicions which men entertained, and which they hardly ventured to whisper to each other].

That blow had accomplished more than a great army could have done, and Spain now reigned in Paris. The House of Austria, without making any military preparations, had

conquered, and the great war of religion and politics was postponed for half a dozen years.



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This history has no immediate concern with solving the mysteries of that stupendous crime. The woman who had sought to save the King's life now denounced Epernon as the chief murderer, and was arrested, examined, accused of lunacy, proved to be perfectly sane, and, persisting in her statements with perfect coherency, was imprisoned for life for her pains; the Duke furiously demanding her instant execution.

The documents connected with the process were carefully suppressed. The assassin, tortured and torn by four horses, was supposed to have revealed nothing and to have denied the existence of accomplices.

The great accused were too omnipotent to be dealt with by humble accusers or by convinced but powerless tribunals. The trial was all mystery, hugger-mugger, horror. Yet the murderer is known to have dictated to the Greflier Voisin, just before expiring on the Greve, a declaration which that functionary took down in a handwriting perhaps purposely illegible.

Two centuries and a half have passed away, yet the illegible original record is said to exist, to have been plainly read, and to contain the names of the Queen and the Duke of Epernon.

Twenty-six years before, the pistol of Balthasar Gerard had destroyed the foremost man in Europe and the chief of a commonwealth just struggling into existence. Yet Spain and Rome, the instigators and perpetrators of the crime, had not reaped the victory which they had the right to expect. The young republic, guided by Barneveld and loyal to the son of the murdered stadholder, was equal to the burthen suddenly descending upon its shoulders. Instead of despair there had been constancy. Instead of distracted counsels there had been heroic union of heart and hand. Rather than bend to Rome and grovel to Philip, it had taken its sovereignty in its hands, offered it successively, without a thought of self-aggrandizement on the part of its children, to the crowns of France and Great Britain, and, having been repulsed by both, had learned after fiery trials and incredible exertions to assert its own high and foremost place among the independent powers of the world.

And now the knife of another priest-led fanatic, the wretched but unflinching instrument of a great conspiracy, had at a blow decapitated France. No political revolution could be much more thorough than that which had been accomplished in a moment of time by Francis Ravallac.

On the 14th of May, France, while in spiritual matters obedient to the Pope, stood at the head of the forces of Protestantism throughout Europe, banded together to effect the downfall of the proud house of Austria, whose fortunes and fate were synonymous with Catholicism. The Baltic powers, the majority of the Teutonic races, the Kingdom of Britain, the great Republic of the Netherlands, the northernmost and most warlike governments of Italy, all stood at the disposition of the warrior-king.

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Venice, who had hitherto, in the words of a veteran diplomatist, “shunned to look a league or a confederation in the face, if there was any Protestant element in it, as if it had been the head of Medusa,” had formally forbidden the passage of troops northwards to the relief of the assailed power. Savoy, after direful hesitations, had committed herself body and soul to the great enterprise. Even the Pope, who feared the overshadowing personality of Henry, and was beginning to believe his house’s private interests more likely to flourish under the protection of the French than the Spanish king, was wavering in his fidelity to Spain and tempted by French promises: If he should prove himself incapable of effecting a pause in the great crusade, it was doubtful on which side he would ultimately range himself; for it was at least certain that the new Catholic League, under the chieftainship of Maximilian of Bavaria, was resolved not to entangle its fortunes inextricably with those of the Austrian house.

The great enterprise, first unfolding itself with the episode of Cleve and Berg and whimsically surrounding itself with the fantastic idyl of the Princess of Conde, had attained vast and misty proportions in the brain of its originator. Few political visions are better known in history than the “grand design” of Henry for rearranging the map of the world at the moment when, in the middle of May, he was about to draw his sword. Spain reduced to the Mediterranean and the Pyrenees, but presented with both the Indies, with all America and the whole Orient in fee; the Empire taken from Austria and given to Bavaria; a constellation of States in Italy, with the Pope for president-king; throughout the rest of Christendom a certain number of republics, of kingdoms, of religions— a great confederation of the world, in short—with the most Christian king for its dictator and protector, and a great Amphictyonic council to regulate all disputes by solemn arbitration, and to make war in the future impossible, such in little was his great design.

Nothing could be more humane, more majestic, more elaborate, more utterly preposterous. And all this gigantic fabric had passed away in an instant—at one stroke of a broken table knife sharpened on a carriage wheel.

Most pitiful was the condition of France on the day after, and for years after, the murder of the King. Not only was the kingdom for the time being effaced from the roll of nations, so far as external relations were concerned, but it almost ceased to be a kingdom. The ancient monarchy of Hugh Capet, of Saint-Louis, of Henry of France and Navarre, was transformed into a turbulent, self-seeking, quarrelsome, pillaging, pilfering democracy of *grands*. The Queen-Regent was tossed hither and thither at the sport of the winds and waves which shifted every hour in that tempestuous court.



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No man pretended to think of the State. Every man thought only of himself. The royal exchequer was plundered with a celerity and cynical recklessness such as have been rarely seen in any age or country. The millions so carefully hoarded by Sully, and exhibited so dramatically by that great minister to the enraptured eyes of his sovereign; that treasure in the Bastille on which Henry relied for payment of the armies with which he was to transform the world, all disappeared in a few weeks to feed the voracious maw of courtiers, paramours, and partisans!

The Queen showered gold like water upon her beloved Concini that he might purchase his Marquisate of Ancre, and the charge of first gentleman of the court from Bouillon; that he might fit himself for the government of Picardy; that he might elevate his marquisate into a dukedom. Conde, having no further reason to remain in exile, received as a gift from the trembling Mary de' Medici the magnificent Hotel Gondy, where the Dutch ambassadors had so recently been lodged, for which she paid 65,000 crowns, together with 25,000 crowns to furnish it, 50,000 crowns to pay his debts, 50,000 more as yearly pension.

He claimed double, and was soon at sword's point with the Queen in spite of her lavish bounty.

Epernon, the true murderer of Henry, trampled on courts of justice and councils of ministers, frightened the court by threatening to convert his possession of Metz into an independent sovereignty, as Balagny had formerly seized upon Cambrai, smothered for ever the process of Ravailac, caused those to be put to death or immured for life in dungeons who dared to testify to his complicity in the great crime, and strode triumphantly over friends and enemies throughout France, although so crippled by the gout that he could scarcely walk up stairs.

There was an end to the triumvirate. Sully's influence was gone for ever. The other two dropped the mask. The Chancellor and Villeroy revealed themselves to be what they secretly had always been—humble servants and stipendiaries of Spain. The formal meetings of the council were of little importance, and were solemn, tearful, and stately; draped in woe for the great national loss. In the private cabinet meetings in the entresol of the Louvre, where the Nuncius and the Spanish ambassador held counsel with Epernon and Villeroy and Jeannin and Sillery, the tone was merry and loud; the double Spanish marriage and confusion to the Dutch being the chief topics of consultation.

But the anarchy grew day by day into almost hopeless chaos. There was no satisfying the princes of the blood nor the other grandees. Conde, whose reconciliation with the Princess followed not long after the death of Henry and his own return to France, was insatiable in his demands for money, power, and citadels of security. Soissons, who might formerly have received the lieutenancy-general of the kingdom by sacrificing the lilies on his wife's gown,

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now disputed for that office with his elder brother Conti, the Prince claiming it by right of seniority, the Count denouncing Conti as deaf, dumb, and imbecile, till they drew poniards on each other in the very presence of the Queen; while Conde on one occasion, having been refused the citadels which he claimed, Blaye and Chateau Trompette, threw his cloak over his nose and put on his hat while the Queen was speaking, and left the council in a fury, declaring that Villeroy and the chancellor were traitors, and that he would have them both soundly cudgelled. Guise, Lorraine, Epernon, Bouillon, and other great lords always appeared in the streets of Paris at the head of three, four, or five hundred mounted and armed retainers; while the Queen in her distraction gave orders to arm the Paris mob to the number of fifty thousand, and to throw chains across the streets to protect herself and her son against the turbulent nobles.

Sully, hardly knowing to what saint to burn his candle, being forced to resign his great posts, was found for a time in strange political combination with the most ancient foes of his party and himself. The kaleidoscope whirling with exasperating quickness showed ancient Leaguers and Lorrainers banded with and protecting Huguenots against the Crown, while princes of the blood, hereditary patrons and chiefs of the Huguenots, became partisans and stipendiaries of Spain.

It is easy to see that circumstances like these rendered the position of the Dutch commonwealth delicate and perilous.

Sully informed Aerssens and van der Myle, who had been sent back to Paris on special mission very soon after the death of the King, that it took a hundred hours now to accomplish a single affair, whereas under Henry a hundred affairs were transacted in a single hour. But Sully's sun had set, and he had few business conferences now with the ambassadors.

Villeroy and the Chancellor had fed fat their ancient grudge to the once omnipotent minister, and had sworn his political ruin. The old secretary of state had held now complete control of the foreign alliances and combinations of France, and the Dutch ambassadors could be under no delusion as to the completeness of the revolution.

"You will find a passion among the advisers of the Queen," said Villeroy to Aerssens and van der Myle, "to move in diametrical opposition to the plans of the late king." And well might the ancient Leaguer and present pensionary of Spain reveal this foremost fact in a policy of which he was in secret the soul. He wept profusely when he first received Francis Aerssens, but after these "useless tears," as the Envoy called them, he soon made it manifest that there was no more to be expected of France, in the great project which its government had so elaborately set on foot.

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Villeroy was now sixty-six years of age, and had been secretary of state during forty-two years and under four kings. A man of delicate health, frail body, methodical habits, capacity for routine, experience in political intrigue, he was not personally as greedy of money as many of his contemporaries, and was not without generosity; but he loved power, the Pope, and the House of Austria. He was singularly reserved in public, practised successfully the talent of silence, and had at last arrived at the position he most coveted, the virtual presidency of the council, and saw the men he most hated beneath his feet.

At the first interview of Aerssens with the Queen-Regent she was drowned in tears, and could scarcely articulate an intelligible sentence. So far as could be understood she expressed her intention of carrying out the King's plans, of maintaining the old alliances, of protecting both religions. Nothing, however, could be more preposterous than such phrases. Villeroy, who now entirely directed the foreign affairs of the kingdom, assured the Ambassador that France was much more likely to apply to the States for assistance than render them aid in any enterprise whatever. "There is no doubt," said Aerssens, "that the Queen is entirely in the hands of Spain and the priests." Villeroy, whom Henry was wont to call the pedagogue of the council, went about sighing dismally, wishing himself dead, and perpetually ejaculating, "Ho! poor France, how much hast thou still to suffer!" In public he spoke of nothing but of union, and of the necessity of carrying out the designs of the King, instructing the docile Queen to hold the same language. In private he was quite determined to crush those designs for ever, and calmly advised the Dutch government to make an amicable agreement with the Emperor in regard to the Cleve affair as soon as possible; a treaty which would have been shameful for France and the possessory princes, and dangerous, if not disastrous, for the States-General. "Nothing but feverish and sick counsels," he said, "could be expected from France, which had now lost its vigour and could do nothing but groan."

Not only did the French council distinctly repudiate the idea of doing anything more for the princes than had been stipulated by the treaty of Hall—that is to say, a contingent of 8000 foot and 2000 horse—but many of them vehemently maintained that the treaty, being a personal one of the late king, was dead with him? The duty of France was now in their opinion to withdraw from these mad schemes as soon as possible, to make peace with the House of Austria without delay, and to cement the friendship by the double marriages.



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Bouillon, who at that moment hated Sully as much as the most vehement Catholic could do, assured the Dutch envoy that the government was, under specious appearances, attempting to deceive the States; a proposition which it needed not the evidence of that most intriguing duke to make manifest to so astute a politician; particularly as there was none more bent on playing the most deceptive game than Bouillon. There would be no troops to send, he said, and even if there were, there would be no possibility of agreeing on a chief. The question of religion would at once arise. As for himself, the Duke protested that he would not accept the command if offered him. He would not agree to serve under the Prince of Anhalt, nor would he for any consideration in the world leave the court at that moment. At the same time Aerssens was well aware that Bouillon, in his quality of first marshal of France, a Protestant and a prince having great possessions on the frontier, and the brother-in-law of Prince Maurice, considered himself entitled to the command of the troops should they really be sent, and was very indignant at the idea of its being offered to any one else.

[Aerssens worked assiduously, two hours long on one occasion, to effect a reconciliation between the two great Protestant chiefs, but found Bouillon's demands "so shameful and unreasonable" that he felt obliged to renounce all further attempts. In losing Sully from the royal councils, the States' envoy acknowledged that the Republic had lost everything that could be depended on at the French court. "All the others are time-serving friends," he said, "or saints without miracles."—Aerssens to Barneveld, 11 June, 1610.]

He advised earnestly therefore that the States should make a firm demand for money instead of men, specifying the amount that might be considered the equivalent of the number of troops originally stipulated.

It is one of the most singular spectacles in history; France sinking into the background of total obscurity in an instant of time, at one blow of a knife, while the Republic, which she had been patronizing, protecting, but keeping always in a subordinate position while relying implicitly upon its potent aid, now came to the front, and held up on its strong shoulders an almost desperate cause. Henry had been wont to call the States-General "his courage and his right arm," but he had always strictly forbidden them to move an inch in advance of him, but ever to follow his lead, and to take their directions from himself. They were a part, and an essential one, in his vast designs; but France, or he who embodied France, was the great providence, the destiny, the all-directing, all-absorbing spirit, that was to remodel and control the whole world. He was dead, and France and her policy were already in a state of rapid decomposition.



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Barneveld wrote to encourage and sustain the sinking state. "Our courage is rising in spite and in consequence of the great misfortune," he said. He exhorted the Queen to keep her kingdom united, and assured her that My Lords the States would maintain themselves against all who dared to assail them. He offered in their name the whole force of the Republic to take vengeance on those who had procured the assassination, and to defend the young king and the Queen-Mother against all who might make any attempt against their authority. He further declared, in language not to be mistaken, that the States would never abandon the princes and their cause.

This was the earliest indication on the part of the Advocate of the intention of the Republic—so long as it should be directed by his counsels—to support the cause of the young king, helpless and incapable as he was, and directed for the time being by a weak and wicked mother, against the reckless and depraved grandees, who were doing their best to destroy the unity and the independence of France, Cornelis van der Myle was sent back to Paris on special mission of condolence and comfort from the States-General to the sorely afflicted kingdom.

On the 7th of June, accompanied by Aerssens, he had a long interview with Villeroy. That minister, as usual, wept profusely, and said that in regard to Cleve it was impossible for France to carry out the designs of the late king. He then listened to what the ambassadors had to urge, and continued to express his melancholy by weeping. Drying his tears for a time, he sought by a long discourse to prove that France during this tender minority of the King would be incapable of pursuing the policy of his father. It would be even too burthensome to fulfil the Treaty of Hall. The friends of the crown, he said, had no occasion to further it, and it would be much better to listen to propositions for a treaty. Archduke Albert was content not to interfere in the quarrel if the Queen would likewise abstain; Leopold's forces were altogether too weak to make head against the army of the princes, backed by the power of My Lords the States, and Julich was neither strong nor well garrisoned. He concluded by calmly proposing that the States should take the matter in hand by themselves alone, in order to lighten the burthen of France, whose vigour had been cut in two by that accursed knife.

A more sneaking and shameful policy was never announced by the minister of a great kingdom. Surely it might seem that Ravailac had cut in twain not the vigour only but the honour and the conscience of France. But the envoys, knowing in their hearts that they were talking not with a French but a Spanish secretary of state, were not disposed to be the dupes of his tears or his blandishments.



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They reminded him that the Queen-Regent and her ministers since the murder of the King had assured the States-General and the princes of their firm intention to carry out the Treaty of Hall, and they observed that they had no authority to talk of any negotiation. The affair of the duchies was not especially the business of the States, and the Secretary was well aware that they had promised their succour on the express condition that his Majesty and his army should lead the way, and that they should follow. This was very far from the plan now suggested, that they should do it all, which would be quite out of the question. France had a strong army, they said, and it would be better to use it than to efface herself so pitiably. The proposition of abstention on the part of the Archduke was a delusion intended only to keep France out of the field.

Villeroy replied by referring to English affairs. King James, he said, was treating them perfidiously. His first letters after the murder had been good, but by the following ones England seemed to wish to put her foot on France's throat, in order to compel her to sue for an alliance. The British ministers had declared their resolve not to carry out that convention of alliance, although it had been nearly concluded in the lifetime of the late king, unless the Queen would bind herself to make good to the King of Great Britain that third part of the subsidies advanced by France to the States which had been furnished on English account!

This was the first announcement of a grievance devised by the politicians now governing France to make trouble for the States with that kingdom and with Great Britain likewise. According to a treaty made at Hampton Court by Sully during his mission to England at the accession of James, it had been agreed that one-third of the moneys advanced by France in aid of the United Provinces should be credited to the account of Great Britain, in diminution of the debt for similar assistance rendered by Elizabeth to Henry. In regard to this treaty the States had not been at all consulted, nor did they acknowledge the slightest obligation in regard to it. The subsidies in men and in money provided for them both by France and by England in their struggle for national existence had always been most gratefully acknowledged by the Republic, but it had always been perfectly understood that these expenses had been incurred by each kingdom out of an intelligent and thrifty regard for its own interest. Nothing could be more ridiculous than to suppose France and England actuated by disinterested sympathy and benevolence when assisting the Netherland people in its life-and-death struggle against the dire and deadly enemy of both crowns. Henry protested that, while adhering to Rome in spiritual matters, his true alliances and strength had been found in the United Provinces, in Germany, and in Great Britain. As for the States, he had spent sixteen millions of livres, he said, in acquiring a perfect benevolence on the part of the States to his person. It was the best bargain he had ever made, and he should take care to preserve it at any cost whatever, for he considered himself able, when closely united with them, to bid defiance to all the kings in Europe together.



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Yet it was now the settled policy of the Queen-Regent's council, so far as the knot of politicians guided by the Nuncius and the Spanish ambassador in the entresols of the Louvre could be called a council, to force the States to refund that third, estimated at something between three and four million livres, which France had advanced them on account of Great Britain.

Villeroy told the two ambassadors at this interview that, if Great Britain continued to treat the Queen-Regent in such fashion, she would be obliged to look about for other allies. There could hardly be doubt as to the quarter in which Mary de' Medici was likely to look. Meantime, the Secretary of State urged the envoys "to intervene at once to mediate the difference." There could be as little doubt that to mediate the difference was simply to settle an account which they did not owe.

The whole object of the Minister at this first interview was to induce the States to take the whole Cleve enterprise upon their own shoulders, and to let France off altogether. The Queen-Regent as then advised meant to wash her hands of the possessory princes once and for ever. The envoys cut the matter short by assuring Villeroy that they would do nothing of the kind. He begged them piteously not to leave the princes in the lurch, and at the same time not to add to the burthens of France at so disastrous a moment.

So they parted. Next day, however, they visited the Secretary again, and found him more dismal and flaccid than ever.

He spoke feebly and drearily about the succour for the great enterprise, recounted all the difficulties in the way, and, having thrown down everything that the day before had been left standing, he tried to excuse an entire change of policy by the one miserable crime.

He painted a forlorn picture of the council and of France. "I can myself do nothing as I wish," added the undisputed controller of that government's policy, and then with a few more tears he concluded by requesting the envoys to address their demands to the Queen in writing.

This was done with the customary formalities and fine speeches on both sides; a dull comedy by which no one was amused.

Then Bouillon came again, and assured them that there had been a chance that the engagements of Henry, followed up by the promise of the Queen-Regent, would be carried out, but now the fact was not to be concealed that the continued battery of the Nuncius, of the ambassadors of Spain and of the Archdukes, had been so effective that nothing sure or solid was thenceforth to be expected; the council being resolved to accept the overtures of the Archduke for mutual engagement to abstain from the Julich enterprise.



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Nothing in truth could be more pitiable than the helpless drifting of the once mighty kingdom, whenever the men who governed it withdrew their attention for an instant from their private schemes of advancement and plunder to cast a glance at affairs of State. In their secret heart they could not doubt that France was rushing on its ruin, and that in the alliance of the Dutch commonwealth, Britain, and the German Protestants, was its only safety. But they trembled before the Pope, grown bold and formidable since the death of the dreaded Henry. To offend his Holiness, the King of Spain, the Emperor, and the great Catholics of France, was to make a crusade against the Church. Garnier, the Jesuit, preached from his pulpit that “to strike a blow in the Cleve enterprise was no less a sin than to inflict a stab in the body of our Lord.” The Parliament of Paris having ordered the famous treatise of the Jesuit Mariana—justifying the killing of excommunicated kings by their subjects—to be publicly burned before Notre Dame, the Bishop opposed the execution of the decree. The Parliament of Paris, although crushed by Epernon in its attempts to fix the murder of the King upon himself as the true culprit, was at least strong enough to carry out this sentence upon a printed, volume recommending the deed, and the Queen’s council could only do its best to mitigate the awakened wrath of the Jesuits at this exercise of legal authority.—At the same time, it found on the whole so many more difficulties in a cynical and shameless withdrawal from the Treaty of Hall than in a nominal and tardy fulfilment of its conditions that it resolved at last to furnish the 8000 foot and 2000 horse promised to the possessory princes. The next best thing to abandoning entirely even this little shred, this pitiful remnant, of the splendid designs of Henry was to so arrange matters that the contingent should be feebly commanded, and set on foot in so dilatory a manner that the petty enterprise should on the part of France be purely perfunctory. The grandees of the kingdom had something more important to do than to go crusading in Germany, with the help of a heretic republic, to set up the possessory princes. They were fighting over the prostrate dying form of their common mother for their share of the spoils, stripping France before she was dead, and casting lots for her vesture.

Soissons was on the whole in favour of the Cleve expedition. Epernon was desperately opposed to it, and maltreated Villeroy in full council when he affected to say a word, insincere as the Duke knew it to be, in favour of executing agreements signed by the monarch, and sealed with the great seal of France. The Duke of Guise, finding himself abandoned by the Queen, and bitterly opposed and hated by Soissons, took sides with his deaf and dumb and imbecile brother, and for a brief interval the Duke of Sully joined this strange combination of the House of Lorraine and chiefs of ancient Leaguers, who welcomed him with transport, and promised him security.



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Then Bouillon, potent by his rank, his possessions, and his authority among the Protestants, publicly swore that he would ruin Sully and change the whole order of the government. What more lamentable spectacle, what more desolate future for the cause of religious equality, which for a moment had been achieved in France, than this furious alienation of the trusted leaders of the Huguenots, while their adversaries were carrying everything before them? At the council board Bouillon quarrelled ostentatiously with Sully, shook his fist in his face, and but for the Queen's presence would have struck him. Next day he found that the Queen was intriguing against himself as well as against Sully, was making a cat's-paw of him, and was holding secret councils daily from which he as well as Sully was excluded. At once he made overtures of friendship to Sully, and went about proclaiming to the world that all Huguenots were to be removed from participation in affairs of state. His vows of vengeance were for a moment hushed by the unanimous resolution of the council that, as first marshal of France, having his principality on the frontier, and being of the Reformed religion, he was the fittest of all to command the expedition. Surely it might be said that the winds and tides were not more changeful than the politics of the Queen's government. The Dutch ambassador was secretly requested by Villeroy to negotiate with Bouillon and offer him the command of the Julich expedition. The Duke affected to make difficulties, although burning to obtain the post, but at last consented. Aerssens communicated at once with Villeroy, and notice of Bouillon's acceptance was given to the Queen, when, behold, the very next day Marshal de la Chatre was appointed to the command expressly because he was a Catholic. Of course the Duke of Bouillon, furious with Soissons and Epernon and the rest of the government, was more enraged than ever against the Queen. His only hope was now in Conde, but Conde at the outset, on arriving at the Louvre, offered his heart to the Queen as a sheet of white paper. Epernon and Soissons received him with delight, and exchanged vows of an eternal friendship of several weeks' duration. And thus all the princes of the blood, all the cousins of Henry of Navarre, except the imbecile Conti, were ranged on the side of Spain, Rome, Mary de' Medici, and Concino Concini, while the son of the Balafre, the Duke of Mayenne, and all their adherents were making common cause with the Huguenots. What better example had been seen before, even in that country of pantomimic changes, of the effrontery with which Religion was made the strumpet of Political Ambition?



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All that day and the next Paris was rife with rumours that there was to be a general massacre of the Huguenots to seal the new-born friendship of a Conde with a Medici. France was to renounce all her old alliances and publicly to enter into treaties offensive and defensive with Spain. A league like that of Bayonne made by the former Medicean Queen-Regent of France was now, at Villeroy's instigation, to be signed by Mary de' Medici. Meantime, Marshal de la Chatre, an honest soldier and fervent Papist, seventy-three years of age, ignorant of the language, the geography, the politics of the country to which he was sent, and knowing the road thither about as well, according to Aerssens, who was requested to give him a little preliminary instruction, as he did the road to India, was to co-operate with Barneveld and Maurice of Nassau in the enterprise against the duchies.

These were the cheerful circumstances amid which the first step in the dead Henry's grand design against the House of Austria and in support of Protestantism in half Europe and of religious equality throughout Christendom, was now to be ventured.

Cornelis van der Myle took leave of the Queen on terminating his brief special embassy, and was fain to content himself with languid assurances from that corpulent Tuscan dame of her cordial friendship for the United Provinces. Villeroy repeated that the contingent to be sent was furnished out of pure love to the Netherlands, the present government being in no wise bound by the late king's promises. He evaded the proposition of the States for renewing the treaty of close alliance by saying that he was then negotiating with the British government on the subject, who insisted as a preliminary step on the repayment of the third part of the sums advanced to the States by the late king.

He exchanged affectionate farewell greetings and good wishes with Jeannin and with the dropsical Duke of Mayenne, who was brought in his chair to his old fellow Leaguer's apartments at the moment of the Ambassador's parting interview.

There was abundant supply of smooth words, in the plentiful lack of any substantial nutriment, from the representatives of each busy faction into which the Medicean court was divided. Even Epernon tried to say a gracious word to the retiring envoy, assuring him that he would do as much for the cause as a good Frenchman and lover of his fatherland could do. He added, in rather a surly way, that he knew very well how foully he had been described to the States, but that the devil was not as black as he was painted. It was necessary, he said, to take care of one's own house first of all, and he knew very well that the States and all prudent persons would do the same thing.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

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And now the knife of another priest-led fanatic
As with his own people, keeping no back-door open
At a blow decapitated France
Conclusive victory for the allies seemed as predestined
Epernon, the true murderer of Henry
Father Cotton, who was only too ready to betray the secrets
Great war of religion and politics was postponed
Jesuit Mariana—justifying the killing of excommunicated kings
No man pretended to think of the State
Practised successfully the talent of silence
Queen is entirely in the hands of Spain and the priests
Religion was made the strumpet of Political Ambition
Smooth words, in the plentiful lack of any substantial
Stroke of a broken table knife sharpened on a carriage wheel
The assassin, tortured and torn by four horses
They have killed him, 'e ammazato,' cried Concini
Things he could tell which are too odious and dreadful
Uncouple the dogs and let them run
Vows of an eternal friendship of several weeks' duration
What could save the House of Austria, the cause of Papacy
Wrath of the Jesuits at this exercise of legal authority

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