

PART XVII

THE HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS

BASED CHIEFLY UPON THE FOLLOWING AUTHORITIES

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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE NETHERLANDS

BY JOHN LOthrop MOTLEY

(From his *Rise of the Dutch Republic*)

THE LAND

THE northwestern corner of the vast plain which extends from the German Ocean to the Ural Mountains is occupied by the countries called the Netherlands. This small triangle, enclosed between France, Germany, and the sea, is divided by the modern kingdoms of Belgium and Holland into two nearly equal portions. Our earliest information concerning this territory is derived from the Romans. Julius Cæsar^c has saved from oblivion the heroic savages who fought against his legions in defence of their dismal homes with ferocious but unfortunate patriotism; and the great poet of England, learning from the conqueror's *Commentaries* the name of the boldest tribe, has kept the Nervii, after almost twenty centuries, still fresh and familiar in our ears.

Tacitus,^d too, has described with singular minuteness the struggle between the people of these regions and the power of Rome, overwhelming, although tottering to its fall; and has, moreover, devoted several chapters of his work upon Germany to a description of the most remarkable Teutonic tribes of the Netherlands.

Geographically and ethnographically, the Low Countries belong both to Gaul and to Germany. It is even doubtful to which of the two the Batavian island, which is the core of the whole country, was reckoned by the Romans. It is, however, most probable that all the land, with the exception of Friesland, was considered a part of Gaul. Three great rivers—the Rhine, the Maas, and the Schelde—had deposited their slime for ages among the dunes and sandbanks heaved up by the ocean around their mouths. A delta was thus formed, habitable at last for man.¹ It was by nature a wide morass, in which oozy islands and savage forests were interspersed among lagoons and shallows; a district lying partly below the level of the ocean at its higher tides, subject to constant overflow from the rivers, and to frequent and terrible inundations by the sea.

The Rhine, leaving at last the regions where its storied lapse, through so many ages, has been consecrated alike by nature and art—by poetry and eventful truth—flows reluctantly through the basalt portal of the Seven Mountains into the open fields which extend to the German Sea. After entering this vast meadow, the stream divides itself into two branches, becoming thus the two-horned Rhine of Virgil, and holds in these two arms the island of Batavia.

[¹ Napoleon, indeed, having conquered the Rhine, claimed its creature Holland as his "by right of devolution"—a different use of the word that Louis XIV employed in claiming the Spanish Netherlands for his queen. Of Napoleon's claim, Thorold Rogers^f says: "One may dispute the logic of the great captain, but his geology is incontestable."]

The Maas, taking its rise in the Vosges, pours itself through the Ardennes Wood, pierces the rocky ridges upon the southeastern frontier of the Low Countries, receives the Sambre in the midst of that picturesque anthracite basin where now stands the city of Namur, and then moves toward the north, through nearly the whole length of the country, till it mingles its waters with the Rhine.

The Schelde, almost exclusively a Belgian river, after leaving its fountains in Picardy, flows through the present provinces of Flanders and Hainault. In Cæsar's time it was suffocated before reaching the sea in quicksands and thickets, which long afforded protection to the savage inhabitants against the Roman arms, and which the slow process of nature and the untiring industry of man have since converted into the archipelago of Zeeland and South Holland. These islands were unknown to the Romans.

Such were the rivers which, with their numerous tributaries, coursed through the spongy land. Their frequent overflow, when forced back upon their currents by the stormy sea, rendered the country almost uninhabitable. Here, within a half-submerged territory, a race of wretched ichthyophagi dwelt upon *terpen*, or mounds, which they had raised, like beavers, above the almost fluid soil. Here, at a later day, the same race chained the tyrant Ocean and his mighty streams into subserviency, forcing them to fertilize, to render commodious, to cover with a beneficent network of veins and arteries, and to bind by watery highways with the furthest ends of the world, a country disinherited by nature of its rights. A region, outcast of ocean and earth, wrested at last from both domains their richest treasures. A race, engaged for generations in stubborn conflict with the angry elements, was unconsciously educating itself for its great struggle with the still more savage despotism of man.

The whole territory of the Netherlands was girt with forests. An extensive belt of woodland skirted the seacoast, reaching beyond the mouths of the Rhine. Along the outer edge of this barrier, the dunes cast up by the sea were prevented by the close tangle of thickets from drifting further inward, and thus formed a breastwork which time and art were to strengthen. The groves of Haarlem and the Hague are relics of this ancient forest. The Badahuenna Wood, horrid with Druidic sacrifices, extended along the eastern line of the vanished Lake of Flevo. The vast Hercynian forest, nine days' journey in breadth, closed in the country on the German side, stretching from the banks of the Rhine to the remote regions of the Dacians, in such vague immensity (says the conqueror of the whole country, Cæsar), that no German, after travelling sixty days, had ever reached, or even heard of, its commencement. On the south, the famous groves of Ardennes, haunted by faun and satyr, embowered the country, and separated it from Celtic Gaul.

Thus inundated by mighty rivers, quaking beneath the level of the ocean, belted about by hirsute forests, this low land, nether land, hollow land, or Holland, seemed hardly deserving the arms of the all-accomplished Roman. Yet foreign tyranny, from the earliest ages, has coveted this meagre territory as lustfully as it has sought to wrest from their native possessors those lands with the fatal gift of beauty for their dower; while the genius of liberty has inspired as noble a resistance to oppression here as it ever aroused in Grecian or Italian breasts.

THE EARLY PEOPLES

It can never be satisfactorily ascertained who were the aboriginal inhabitants. The record does not reach beyond Cæsar's epoch, and he found the

territory on the left of the Rhine mainly tenanted by tribes of the Celtic family. That large division of the Indo-European group which had already overspread many portions of Asia Minor, Greece, Germany, the British Islands, France, and Spain, had been long settled in Belgic Gaul, and constituted the bulk of its population. Checked in its westward movement by the Atlantic, its current began to flow backwards towards its fountains, so that the Gallic portion of the Netherland population was derived from the original race in its earlier wanderings and from the later and refluxing tide coming out of Celtic Gaul. The modern appellation of the Walloons points to the affinity of their ancestors with the Gallic, Welsh, and Gaelic family.¹ The Belgæ were in many respects a superior race to most of their blood-allies. They were, according to Cæsar's testimony, the bravest of all the Celts. This may be in part attributed to the presence of several German tribes, who, at this period, had already forced their way across the Rhine, mingled their qualities with the Belgic material, and lent an additional mettle to the Celtic blood. The heart of the country was thus inhabited by a Gallic race, but the frontiers had been taken possession of by Teutonic tribes.

When the Cimbri and their associates, about a century before our era, made their memorable onslaught upon Rome, the early inhabitants of the Rhine island of Batavia, who were probably Celts, joined in the expedition.² A recent and tremendous inundation had swept away their miserable homes, and even the trees of the forests, and had thus rendered them still more dissatisfied with their gloomy abodes. The island was deserted of its population. At about the same period a civil dissension among the Chatti—a powerful German race within the Hercynian forest—resulted in the expatriation of a portion of the people. The exiles sought a new home in the empty Rhine island, called it *Bet-auw*, or “good-meadow,” and were themselves called, thenceforward, Batavi, or Batavians.

These Batavians, according to Tacitus,³ were the bravest of all the Germans. The Chatti, of whom they formed a portion, were a pre-eminently warlike race. “Others go to battle,” says the historian, “these go to war.” Their bodies were more hardy, their minds more vigorous, than those of other tribes. Their young men cut neither hair nor beard till they had slain an enemy. On the field of battle, in the midst of carnage and plunder, they, for the first time, bared their faces. The cowardly and sluggish, only, remained unshorn. They wore an iron ring, too, or shackle upon their necks until they had performed the same achievement, a symbol which they then threw away, as the emblem of sloth. The Batavians were ever spoken of by the Romans with entire respect. They conquered the Belgians, they forced the free Frisians to pay tribute, but they called the Batavians their friends.³ The tax-gatherer never invaded their island. Honourable alliance united them with the Romans. It was, however, the alliance of the giant and the dwarf. The Roman gained glory and empire, the Batavian gained nothing but the hardest blows. The Batavian cavalry became famous throughout the republic and the empire. They were the favourite troops of Cæsar, and with

[¹ The remains found in the cairns, the Druidic altars of Walcheren, and names of places such as Walcheren, Nimuegen, etc., are further evidence.]

[² For fuller details of these and other Northern tribes, see the History of Rome, especially vol. V, chapters 7, 8, 16, 22 and vol. VII, book 2, chapter 3.]

[³ Zosimus indeed reckons Batavia as part of the Roman empire, but the testimony of a Greek, writing in the fifth century, cannot be put in competition with that of Tacitus,³ who expressly says that it was not tributary, and always speaks of it as an independent state. The Greek author probably drew the conclusion from the presence of Batavian cohorts in the imperial army. — DAVIES.*]

reason, for it was their valour which turned the tide of battle at Pharsalia. From the death of Julius down to the times of Vespasian, the Batavian legion was the imperial body guard, the Batavian island the basis of operations in the Roman wars with Gaul, Germany, and Britain.

Beyond the Batavians, upon the north, dwelt the great Frisian family, occupying the regions between the Rhine and Ems. The Zuyder Zee and the Dollart, both caused by the terrific inundations of the thirteenth century, and not existing at this period, did not then interpose boundaries between kindred tribes. All formed a homogeneous nation of pure German origin.

Thus, the population of the country was partly Celtic, partly German. Of these two elements, dissimilar in their tendencies and always difficult to blend, the Netherland people has ever been compounded. A certain fatality of history has perpetually helped to separate still more widely these constituents, instead of detecting and stimulating the elective affinities which existed. Religion, too, upon all great historical occasions, has acted as the most powerful of dissolvents. Otherwise, had so many valuable and contrasted characteristics been early fused into a whole, it would be difficult to show a race more richly endowed by Nature for dominion and progress than the Belgo-Germanic people.

Physically the two races resembled each other. Both were of vast stature. The gigantic Gaul derided the Roman soldiers as a band of pigmies. The German excited astonishment by his huge body and muscular limbs. Both were fair, with fierce blue eyes, but the Celt had yellow hair floating over his shoulders, and the German long locks of fiery red, which he even dyed with woad to heighten the favourite colour, and wore twisted into a war-knot upon the top of his head.

"All the Gauls are of very high stature," says a soldier who fought under Julian (Ammianus Marcellinus *l.*). "They are white, golden-haired, terrible in the fierceness of their eyes, greedy of quarrels, bragging and insolent. A band of strangers could not resist one of them in a brawl, assisted by his strong blue-eyed wife, especially when she begins, gnashing her teeth, her neck swollen, brandishing her vast and snowy arms, and kicking with her heels at the same time, to deliver her fisticuffs, like bolts from the twisted strings of a catapult. The voices of many are threatening and formidable. They are quick to anger, but quickly appeased. All are clean in their persons; nor among them is ever seen any man or woman, as elsewhere, squalid in ragged garments. At all ages they are apt for military service. The old man goes forth to the fight with equal strength of breast, with limbs as hardened by cold and assiduous labour, and as contemptuous of all dangers, as the young. Not one of them, as in Italy is often the case, was ever known to cut off his thumbs to avoid the service of Mars."

EARLY FORMS OF GOVERNMENT AND RELIGION

The polity of each race differed widely from that of the other. The government of both may be said to have been republican, but the Gallic tribes were aristocracies, in which the influence of clanship was a predominant feature; while the German system, although nominally regal, was in reality democratic. In Gaul were two orders, the nobility and the priesthood, while the people, says Cæsar,^c were all slaves. The knights or nobles were all trained to arms. Each went forth to battle, followed by his dependents, while a chief of all the clans was appointed to take command during the war. The prince or chief governor was elected annually, but only by the nobles.

The people had no rights at all, and were glad to assign themselves as slaves to any noble who was strong enough to protect them. In peace the druids exercised the main functions of government. They decided all controversies, civil and criminal. To rebel against their decrees was punished by exclusion from the sacrifices—a most terrible excommunication, through which the criminal was cut off from all intercourse with his fellow creatures.

With the Germans the sovereignty resided in the great assembly of the people. There were slaves, indeed, but in small number, consisting either of prisoners of war or of those unfortunates who had forfeited their liberty in games of chance. Their chieftains, although called by the Romans princes and kings, were, in reality, generals chosen by universal suffrage. All state affairs were in the hands of this fierce democracy. The elected chieftains had rather authority to persuade than power to command.

The Gauls were an agricultural people. They were not without many arts of life. They had extensive flocks and herds, and they even exported salted provisions as far as Rome. The truculent German (*Ger-mann*, *Heer-mann*, "war-man,") considered carnage the only useful occupation, and despised agriculture as enervating and ignoble. It was base, in his opinion, to gain by sweat what was more easily acquired by blood. The Gauls built towns and villages. The German built his solitary hut where inclination prompted. Close neighborhood was not to his taste.

In their system of religion the two races were most widely contrasted. The Gauls were a priest-ridden race. Their druids¹ were a dominant caste, presiding even over civil affairs, while in religious matters their authority was despotic. What were the principles of their wild theology will never be thoroughly ascertained, but we know too much of its sanguinary rites. The imagination shudders to penetrate those shaggy forests, ringing with the death-shrieks of ten thousand human victims, and with the hideous hymns chanted by smoke and blood-stained priests to the savage gods whom they served.

The German, in his simplicity, had raised himself to a purer belief than that of the sensuous Roman or the superstitious Gaul. He believed in a single, supreme, almighty God, All-Vater or All-Father. This divinity was too sublime to be incarnated or imaged, too infinite to be enclosed in temples built with hands. Such is the Roman's testimony to the lofty conception of the German. The fantastic intermixture of Roman mythology with the gloomy but modified superstition of romanised Celts was not favourable to the simple character of German theology. Within that little river territory, amid those obscure morasses of the Rhine and Schelde, three great forms of religion—the sanguinary superstition of the druid, the sensuous polytheism of the Roman, the elevated but dimly groping creed of the German—stood for centuries, face to face, until, having mutually debased and destroyed each other, they all faded away in the pure light of Christianity.

[¹ The druids have been a source of much controversy. Their practice of human sacrifice has been debated. G. Dottin^o notes that "Sacrifices were, in their origin, human sacrifices." In 94 B.C. the Roman senate forbade them and by 19 B.C. they would seem to have disappeared. Alexander Bertrand^a says: "It is impossible to deny, after a well-digested study of the texts, that human sacrifices had been very popular before the Roman conquest and were in common use in many parts of Gaul and Germany. It is certain that the druids not only tolerated but authorised by their presence these sacrifices, though in Ireland, the most druidic country of all, liturgic human sacrifice was unknown." He claims that human sacrifice antedated the druids in Gaul and that they were not to blame for it. As for their functions Dottin does not credit them with civil authority, but sets them down as "soothsayers, priests, professors, magicians, and physicians." He doubts the frequently advanced theory that Celtic monasteries were an outgrowth of druidic communities.]

Thus contrasted were Gaul and German in religious and political systems. The difference was no less remarkable in their social characteristics. The Gaul was singularly unchaste. The marriage state was almost unknown. Many tribes lived in most revolting and incestuous concubinage; brethren, parents, and children having wives in common. The German was loyal as the Celt was dissolute. Alone among barbarians, he contented himself with a single wife, save that a few dignitaries, from motives of policy, were permitted a larger number. On the marriage day the German offered presents to his bride—not the bracelets and golden necklaces with which the Gaul adorned his fair-haired concubine, but oxen and a bridled horse, a sword, a shield, and a spear—symbols that thenceforward she was to share his labours and to become a portion of himself.

They differed, too, in the honours paid to the dead. The funerals of the Gauls were pompous. Both burned the corpse, but the Celt cast into the flames the favourite animals, and even the most cherished slaves and dependents of the master. Vast monuments of stone or piles of earth were raised above the ashes of the dead. Scattered relics of the Celtic age are yet visible throughout Europe, in these huge but unsightly memorials.

The German was not ambitious at the grave. He threw neither garments nor odours upon the funeral pyre, but the arms and the war-horse of the departed were burned and buried with him. The turf was his only sepulchre, the memory of his valour his only monument. Even tears were forbidden to the men. "It was esteemed honourable," says the historian, "for women to lament, for men to remember."

The parallel need be pursued no further. Thus much it was necessary to recall to the historical student concerning the prominent characteristics by which the two great races of the land were distinguished: characteristics which time has rather hardened than effaced. In the contrast and the separation lies the key to much of their history. Had providence permitted a fusion of the two races, it is possible, from their position, and from the geographical and historical link which they would have afforded to the dominant tribes of Europe, that a world-empire might have been the result, different in many respects from any which has ever arisen. Speculations upon what might have been are idle. It is well, however, to ponder the many misfortunes resulting from a mutual repulsion, which, under other circumstances and in other spheres, has been exchanged for mutual attraction and support.

RELATIONS WITH ROME

The earliest chapter in the history of the Netherlands was written by their conqueror. Celtic Gaul is already in the power of Rome; the Belgic tribes, alarmed at the approaching danger, arm against the universal tyrant. Inflammable, quick to strike, but too fickle to prevail against so powerful a foe, they hastily form a league of almost every clan. At the first blow of Cæsar's sword, the frail confederacy falls asunder like a rope of sand. The tribes scatter in all directions. Nearly all are soon defeated, and sue for mercy. The Nervii, true to the German blood in their veins, swear to die rather than surrender. They, at least, are worthy of their cause. Cæsar advances against them at the head of eight legions. Drawn up on the banks of the Sambre, they await the Roman's approach. Eight veteran Roman legions, with the world's victor at their head, are too much for the brave but undisciplined Nervii.¹

[¹ The full account of this battle in Cæsar's own words will be found in vol. V, chapter 22.]

They fought like men to whom life without liberty was a curse. They were not defeated, but exterminated. Of many thousand fighting men went home but five hundred. Upon reaching the place of refuge where they had bestowed their women and children, Cæsar found, after the battle, that there were but three of their senators left alive. So perished the Nervii. Cæsar commanded his legions to treat with respect the little remnant of the tribe which had just fallen to swell the empty echo of his glory, and then, with hardly a breathing pause, he proceeded to annihilate the Aduatici, the Menapii, and the Morini.

Gaul being thus pacified, as, with sublime irony, he expresses himself concerning a country some of whose tribes had been annihilated, some sold as slaves, and others hunted to their lairs like beasts of prey, the conqueror departed for Italy. Legations for peace from many German races to Rome were the consequence of these great achievements. Among others the Batavians formed an alliance with the masters of the world. Their position was always an honourable one. They were justly proud of paying no tribute, but it was, perhaps, because they had nothing to pay. They had few cattle, they could give no hides and horns like the Frisians, and they were therefore allowed to furnish only their blood. From this time forth their cavalry, which was the best of Germany, became renowned in the Roman army upon every battle-field of Europe.

It is melancholy, at a later moment, to find the brave Batavians distinguished in the memorable expedition of Germanicus to crush the liberties of their German kindred. They are forever associated with the sublime but misty image of the great Arminius (Hermann), the hero, educated in Rome, and aware of the colossal power of the empire, who yet, by his genius, valour, and political adroitness, preserved for Germany her nationality, her purer religion, and perhaps even that noble language which her late-flowering literature has rendered so illustrious—but they are associated as enemies, not as friends.

Galba, succeeding to the purple upon the suicide of Nero, dismissed the Batavian life-guards to whom he owed his elevation. He is murdered, Otho and Vitellius contend for the succession, while all eyes are turned upon the eight Batavian regiments. In their hands the scales of empire seem to rest. They declare for Vitellius, and the civil war begins. Otho is defeated; Vitellius acknowledged by senate and people. Fearing, like his predecessors, the imperious turbulence of the Batavian legions, he, too, sends them into Germany [70 A.D.]. It was the signal for a long and extensive revolt, which had well-nigh overturned the Roman power in Gaul and Lower Germany.

THE BATAVIAN HERO CIVILIS (70 A.D.)

Claudius Civilis was a Batavian of noble race, who had served twenty-five years in the Roman armies. His Teutonic name has perished, for, like most savages who become denizens of a civilised state, he had assumed an appellation in the tongue of his superiors. He was a soldier of fortune, and had fought wherever the Roman eagles flew. After a quarter of a century's service he was sent in chains to Rome, and his brother executed, both falsely charged with conspiracy. Such were the triumphs adjudged to Batavian auxiliaries. He escaped with life, and was disposed to consecrate what remained of it to a nobler cause. Civilis was no barbarian. Like the German hero Arminius, he had received a Roman education, and had learned the

degraded condition of Rome. He knew the infamous vices of her rulers; he retained an unconquerable love for liberty and for his own race.

By his courage, eloquence, and talent for political combinations, Civilis effected a general confederation of all the Netherland tribes, both Celtic and German. For a brief moment there was a united people, a Batavian commonwealth. The details of the revolt have been carefully preserved by Tacitus,¹ and form one of his grandest and most elaborate pictures. The battles, the sieges, the defeats, the indomitable spirit of Civilis, still flaming most brightly when the clouds were darkest around him, have been described by the great historian in his most powerful manner.

The struggle was an unsuccessful one. After many victories and many overthrows, Civilis was left alone. The Gallic tribes fell off, and sued for peace. Vespasian, victorious over Vitellius, proved too powerful for his old comrade. Even the Batavians became weary of the hopeless contest, while fortune, after much capricious hovering, settled at last upon the Roman side. The imperial commander Cerealis seized the moment when the cause of the Batavian hero was most desperate to send emissaries among his tribe. These intrigues had their effect. The fidelity of the people was sapped. But the Batavian was not a man to be crushed, nor had he lived so long in the Roman service to be outmatched in politics by the barbarous Germans. He was not to be sacrificed as a peace-offering to revengeful Rome. Watching from beyond the Rhine the progress of defection and the decay of national enthusiasm, he determined to be beforehand with those who were now his enemies. He accepted the offer of negotiation from Cerealis. The Roman general was eager to grant a full pardon, and to re-enlist so brave a soldier in the service of the empire.

A colloquy was agreed upon. The bridge across the Nabalua was broken asunder in the middle, and Cerealis and Civilis met upon the severed sides. The placid stream by which Roman enterprise had connected the waters of the Rhine with the Lake of Flevo, flowed between the imperial commander and the rebel chieftain.

Here the story abruptly terminates. The remainder of the Roman's narrative is lost, and upon that broken bridge the form of the Batavian hero disappears forever. His name fades from history: not a syllable is known of his subsequent career; everything is buried in the profound oblivion which now steals over the scene where he was the most imposing actor.

The soul of Civilis had proved insufficient to animate a whole people; yet it was rather owing to position than to any personal inferiority that his name did not become as illustrious as that of Arminius. The German patriot was neither braver nor wiser than the Batavian, but he had the infinite forests of his fatherland to protect him. Every legion which plunged into those unfathomable depths was forced to retreat disastrously, or to perish miserably. Civilis was hemmed in by the ocean; his country, long the basis of Roman military operations, was accessible by river and canal. The patriotic spirit which he had for a moment raised had abandoned him; his allies had deserted him; he stood alone and at bay, encompassed by the hunters, with death or surrender as his only alternative.

The contest of Civilis with Rome contains a remarkable foreshadowing of the future conflict with Spain, through which the Batavian republic, fifteen centuries later, was to be founded. The characters, the events, the amphibious battles, desperate sieges, slippery alliances, the traits of generosity, audacity, and cruelty, the generous confidence, the broken faith, seem so closely to repeat themselves that history appears to present the selfsame

drama played over and over again, with but a change of actors and of costume. There is more than a fanciful resemblance between Civilis and William the Silent, two heroes of ancient German stock, who had learned the arts of war and peace in the service of a foreign and haughty world-empire. Determination, concentration of purpose, constancy in calamity, elasticity almost preternatural, self-denial, consummate craft in political combinations, personal fortitude, and passionate patriotism were the heroic elements in both. The ambition of each was subordinate to the cause which he served. Both refused the crown, although each, perhaps, contemplated, in the sequel, a Batavian realm of which he would have been the inevitable chief. Both offered the throne to a Gallic prince, for Classicus was but the prototype of Anjou, as Brinno of Brederode, and neither was destined, in this world, to see his sacrifices crowned with success.

The characteristics of the two great races of the land portrayed themselves in the Roman and the Spanish struggle with much the same colours. The Southrons, inflammable, petulant, audacious, were the first to assault and to defy the imperial power in both revolts, while the inhabitants of the northern provinces, slower to be aroused, but of more enduring wrath, were less ardent at the commencement, but, alone, steadfast at the close of the contest. In both wars the southern Celts fell away from the league, their courageous but corrupt chieftains having been purchased with imperial gold to bring about the abject submission of their followers; while the German Netherlands, although eventually subjugated by Rome, after a desperate struggle, were successful in the great conflict with Spain, and trampled out of existence every vestige of her authority. The Batavian republic took its rank among the leading powers of the earth; the Belgic provinces remained Roman, Spanish, Austrian property.

FALL OF ROME AND RISE OF THE FRANKISH EMPIRE

Obscure but important movements in the regions of eternal twilight, revolutions, of which history has been silent, in the mysterious depths of Asia, outpourings of human rivers along the sides of the Altai Mountains, convulsions up-heaving remote realms and unknown dynasties, shock after shock throbbing throughout the barbarian world, and dying upon the edge of civilisation, vast throes which shake the earth as precursory pangs to the birth of a new empire—as dying symptoms of the proud but effete realm which called itself the world; scattered hordes of sanguinary, grotesque savages pushed from their own homes, and hovering with vague purposes upon the Roman frontier, constantly repelled and perpetually reappearing in ever-increasing swarms, guided thither by a fierce instinct, or by mysterious laws—such are the well-known phenomena which preceded the fall of western Rome. Stately, externally powerful, although undermined and putrescent at the core, the death-stricken empire still dashed back the assaults of its barbarous enemies.

During the long struggle intervening between the age of Vespasian and that of Odoacer, during all the preliminary ethnographical revolutions which preceded the great people's wandering, the Netherlands remained subject provinces. Their country was upon the high-road which led the Goths to Rome. Those low and barren tracts were the outlying marches of the empire. Upon that desolate beach broke the first surf from the rising ocean of German freedom which was soon to overwhelm Rome. Yet, although the ancient landmarks were soon well-nigh obliterated, the Netherlands still

remained faithful to the empire, Batavian blood was still poured out for its defence.

By the middle of the fourth century, the Franks and Alamanni (*Alle-männer*, "all-men"), a mass of united Germans, are defeated by the emperor Julian at Strasburg, the Batavian cavalry, as upon many other great occasions, saving the day for despotism. This achievement, one of the last in which the name appears upon historic record, was therefore as triumphant for the valour as it was humiliating to the true fame of the nation. Their individuality soon afterwards disappears, the race having been partly exhausted in the Roman service, partly merged in the Frank and Frisian tribes who occupy the domains of their forefathers.

For a century longer, Rome still retains its outward form, but the swarming nations are now in full career. The Netherlands are successively or simultaneously trampled by Franks, Vandals, Alani, Suevi, Saxons, Frisians, and even Slavs, as the great march of Germany to universal empire, which her prophets and bards had foretold, went majestically forward. The fountains of the frozen North were opened, the waters prevailed, but the ark of Christianity floated upon the flood. As the deluge assuaged, the earth had returned to chaos, the last pagan empire had been washed out of existence, but the faltering infancy of Christian Europe had begun.

After the wanderings had subsided, the Netherlands are found with much the same ethnological character. The Frank dominion has succeeded the Roman, the German stock preponderates over the Celtic, but the national ingredients, although in somewhat altered proportions, remain essentially as before. The old Belgæ, having become romanised in tongue and customs, accept the new empire of the Franks.¹ That people, however, pushed from its hold of the Rhine by thickly-thronging hordes of Gepidi, Quadi, Sarmatæ, Heruli, Saxons, Burgundiones, moves towards the south and west. As the empire falls before Odoacer, they occupy Celtic Gaul with the Belgian portion of the Netherlands, while the Frisians, into which ancient German tribe the old Batavian element has melted, not to be extinguished, but to renew its existence, the "free Frisians," whose name is synonymous with liberty, nearest blood relations of the Anglo-Saxon race, now occupy the northern portion, including the whole future European territory of the Dutch republic.

The history of the Franks becomes, therefore, the history of the Netherlands. The Frisians struggle, for several centuries, against their dominion, until eventually subjugated by Charlemagne. They even encroach upon the Franks in Belgic Gaul, who are determined not to yield their possessions. Moreover, the pious Merovingian *fainéants* desire to plant Christianity among the still pagan Frisians. Dagobert, son of the second Clotaire, advances against them as far as the Weser, takes possession of Utrecht, founds there the first Christian church in Friesland, and establishes a nominal dominion over the whole country.

Yet the feeble Merovingians would have been powerless against rugged Friesland, had not their dynasty already merged in that puissant family of Brabant, which long wielded their power before it assumed their crown. It was Pepin of Herstal, grandson of the Netherlander, Pepin of Landen, who conquered the Frisian Radbod (692 A.D.), and forced him to exchange his royal for the ducal title.

[¹ We find also Britons and Angles inhabiting Batavia, the former having probably taken refuge there from the hostility of the Picts and Scots; the latter may, perhaps, have accompanied the expedition of Hengist and Horsa to England, and remained there, instead of crossing the sea with their companions, according to Procopius.¹ — DAVIES.²]

It was Pepin's bastard, Charles the Hammer [Charles Martel], whose tremendous blows completed his father's work. The new mayor of the palace soon drove the Frisian chief into submission, and even into Christianity. A bishop's indiscretion, however, neutralised the apostolic blows of the mayor. The pagan Radbod had already immersed one of his royal legs in the baptismal font, when a thought struck him.

"Where are my dead forefathers at present?" he said, turning suddenly upon Bishop Wolfran. "In hell, with all other unbelievers," was the imprudent answer. "Mighty well," replied Radbod, removing his leg, "then will I rather feast with my ancestors in the halls of Woden, than dwell with your little starveling band of Christians in heaven."

Entreaties and threats were unavailing. The Frisian declined positively a rite which was to cause an eternal separation from his buried kindred, and he died, as he had lived, a heathen. His son, Poppo, succeeding to the nominal sovereignty, did not actively oppose the introduction of Christianity among his people, but himself refused to be converted. Rebelling against the Frank dominion, he was totally routed by Charles Martel in a great battle (750 A.D.), and perished with a vast number of Frisians.

The Christian dispensation, thus enforced, was now accepted by these northern pagans. The commencement of their conversion had been mainly the work of their brethren from Britain. The monk Wilfred was followed in a few years by the Anglo-Saxon Willibrod. It was he who destroyed the images of Woder in Walcheren, abolished his worship, and founded churches in North Holland. Charles Martel rewarded him with extensive domains about Utrecht, together with many slaves and other chattels. Soon afterwards he was consecrated bishop of all the Frisians. Thus rose the famous episcopate of Utrecht.

Another Anglo-Saxon, Winfred, or Boniface, had been equally active among his Frisian cousins. His crozier had gone hand in hand with the battle-axe. Boniface followed close upon the track of his orthodox coadjutor Charles. By the middle of the eighth century, some hundred thousand Frisians had been slaughtered, and as many more converted. The hammer which smote the Saracens at Tours was at last successful in beating the Netherlanders into Christianity. The labours of Boniface through Upper and Lower Germany were immense; but he, too, received great material rewards. He was created archbishop of Mainz, and, upon the death of Willibrod, bishop of Utrecht. Faithful to his mission, however, he met, heroically, a martyr's death at the hands of the refractory pagans at Dokkum [755 A.D.]. Thus was Christianity established in the Netherlands.

Under Charlemagne, the Frisians often rebelled, making common cause with the Saxons. In 785 A.D. they were, however, completely subjugated, and never rose again until the epoch of their entire separation from the Frank empire. Charlemagne left them their name of free Frisians, and the property in their own land. The feudal system never took root in their soil. "The Frisians," says their statute book, "shall be free, as long as the wind blows out of the clouds and the world stands." They agreed, however, to obey the chiefs whom the Frank monarch should appoint to govern them, according to their own laws. Those laws were collected, and are still extant. The vernacular version of their Asega book contains their ancient customs, together with the Frank additions. The general statutes of Charlemagne were, of course, in vigour also; but that great legislator knew too well the importance attached by all mankind to local customs, to allow his imperial capitulars to interfere, unnecessarily, with the Frisian laws.

Thus again the Netherlands, for the first time since the fall of Rome, were united under one crown imperial. They had already been once united, in their slavery, to Rome. Eight centuries pass away, and they are again united, in subjection, to Charlemagne. The Netherlands, like the other provinces of the great monarch's dominion, were governed by crown-appointed functionaries, military and judicial. In the northeastern or Frisian portion, however, the grants of land were never in the form of revocable benefices or feuds. With this important exception, the whole country shared the fate and enjoyed general organisation of the empire.

But Charlemagne came an age too soon. The chaos which had brooded over Europe since the dissolution of the Roman world was still too absolute. It was not to be fashioned into permanent forms, even by his bold and constructive genius. When the great statesman died, his empire necessarily fell to pieces. Society had need of further disintegration before it could begin to reconstruct itself locally. A new civilisation was not to be improvised by a single mind. When did one man ever civilise a people? In the eighth and ninth centuries there was not even a people to be civilised.

Moreover, the Carolingian race had been exhausted by producing a race of heroes like the Pepins and the Charleses. The realm was divided [in 843 A.D. by the Treaty of Verdun], subdivided, at times partially reunited, like a family farm, among monarchs incompetent alike to hold, to delegate, or to resign the inheritance of the great warrior and lawgiver.

Charles the Simple was the last Carolingian who governed Lotharingia (or Lorraine), in which were comprised most of the Netherlands and Friesland. The German monarch, Henry the Fowler, at that period called king of the East Franks, as Charles of the West Franks, acquired Lorraine by the Treaty of Bonn, Charles reserving the sovereignty over the kingdom during his lifetime. In 925 A.D. however, the Simpleton having been imprisoned and deposed by his own subjects, the Fowler was recognised king of Lorraine.

Thus the Netherlands passed out of France into Germany, remaining, still, provinces of a loose, disjointed empire.

This is the epoch in which the various dukedoms, earldoms, and other petty sovereignties of the Netherlands became hereditary. It was in the year 922 that Charles the Simple presented to Count Dirk the territory of Holland, by letters patent.¹ This narrow hook of land, destined, in future ages, to be the cradle of a considerable empire, stretching through both hemispheres, was, thenceforth, the inheritance of Dirk's descendants. Historically, therefore, he is Dirk I, count of Holland.

Of this small sovereign and his successors, the most powerful foe, for centuries, was the bishop of Utrecht, the origin of whose greatness has been already indicated. Of the other Netherland provinces, now hereditary, the first in rank was Lorraine, once the kingdom of Lothair, now the dukedom of Lorraine. In 965 it was divided into Upper and Lower Lorraine, of which the lower duchy alone belonged to the Netherlands.

Two centuries later, the counts of Louvain, then occupying most of Brabant, obtained a permanent hold of Lower Lorraine, and began to call themselves dukes of Brabant. The same principle of local independence and isolation which created these dukes established the hereditary power of the counts and barons who formerly exercised jurisdiction under them and others. Thus arose sovereign counts of Namur, Hainault, Limburg, Zutphen, dukes of Luxemburg and Gelderland, barons of Mechlin, marquises of Antwerp, and

[¹ See vols. VII, XI and XV.]

others—all petty autocrats. The most important of all, after the house of Lorraine, were the earls of Flanders; for the bold foresters of Charles the Great had soon wrested the sovereignty of their little territory from his feeble descendants as easily as Baldwin, with the iron arm, had deprived the bald Charles of his daughter. Holland, Zealand, Utrecht, Overijssel, Groningen, Drenthe, and Friesland (all seven being portions of Friesland in a general sense), were crowded together upon a little desolate corner of Europe—an obscure fragment of Charlemagne's broken empire. They were afterwards to constitute the United States of the Netherlands, one of the most powerful republics of history. Meantime, for century after century, the counts of Holland and the bishops of Utrecht were to exercise divided sway over the territory.

Thus the whole country was broken into many shreds and patches of sovereignty. The separate history of such half-organised morsels is tedious and petty. Trifling dynasties, where a family or two were everything, the people nothing, leave little worth recording. Even the most devout of genealogists might shudder to chronicle the long succession of so many illustrious obscure.

A glance, however, at the general features of the governmental system now established in the Netherlands, at this important epoch in the world's history, will show the transformations which the country, in common with other portions of the western world, had undergone.

GOVERNMENT AND CIVILISATION OF FEUDAL TIMES

In the tenth century the old Batavian and later Roman forms have faded away. An entirely new polity has succeeded. No great popular assembly asserts its sovereignty, as in the ancient German epoch; no generals and temporary kings are chosen by the nation. The elective power had been lost under the Romans, who, after conquest, had conferred the administrative authority over their subject provinces upon officials appointed by the metropolis. The Franks pursued the same course. In Charlemagne's time, the revolution is complete. Popular assemblies and popular election entirely vanish. Military, civil, and judicial officers—dukes, earls, marquises, and others—are all king's creatures (*knechten des konings, pueri regis*), and so remain, till they abjure the creative power, and set up their own. The principle of Charlemagne, that his officers should govern according to local custom, helps them to achieve their own independence, while it preserves all that is left of national liberty and law.

The counts, assisted by inferior judges, hold diets from time to time—thrice, perhaps, annually. They also summon assemblies in case of war. Thither are called the great vassals, who, in turn, call their lesser vassals, each armed with "a shield, a spear, a bow, twelve arrows, and a cuirass." Such assemblies, convoked in the name of a distant sovereign, whose face his subjects had never seen, whose language they could hardly understand, were very different from those tumultuous mass-meetings, where boisterous freemen, armed with the weapons they loved the best, and arriving sooner or later, according to their pleasure, had been accustomed to elect their generals and magistrates and to raise them upon their shields. The people are now governed, their rulers appointed by an invisible hand. Edicts, issued by a power, as it were, supernatural, demand implicit obedience. The people, acquiescing in their own annihilation, abdicate not only their political but their personal rights. The sceptre, stretched over realms so wide, requires stronger hands than those of degenerate Carolingians. It breaks asunder.

Functionaries become sovereigns, with hereditary, not delegated, right to own the people, to tax their roads and rivers, to take tithings of their blood and sweat, to harass them in all the relations of life. There is no longer a metropolis to protect them from official oppression. Power, the more subdivided, becomes the more tyrannical. The sword is the only symbol of law, the cross is a weapon of offence, the bishop is a consecrated pirate, and every petty baron a burglar; while the people, alternately the prey of duke, prelate, and seignor, shorn and butchered like sheep, esteem it happiness to sell themselves into slavery, or to huddle beneath the castle walls of some little potentate, for the sake of his wolfish protection. Here they build hovels, which they surround from time to time with palisades and muddy entrenchments; and here, in these squalid abodes of ignorance and misery, the genius of liberty, conducted by the spirit of commerce, descends at last to awaken mankind from its sloth and cowardly stupor. A longer night was to intervene, however, before the dawn of day.

The crown-appointed functionaries had been, of course, financial officers. They collected the revenue of the sovereign, one-third of which slipped through their fingers into their own coffers. Becoming sovereigns themselves, they retain these funds for their private emolument. Four principal sources yielded this revenue—royal domains, tolls and imposts, direct levies, and a pleasantry called voluntary contributions or benevolences. In addition to these supplies were also the proceeds of fines. Taxation upon sin was, in those rude ages, a considerable branch of the revenue. The old Frisian laws consisted almost entirely of a discriminating tariff upon crimes. Nearly all the misdeeds which man is prone to commit were punished by a money-bote only. Murder, larceny, arson, rape—all offences against the person were commuted for a definite price. There were a few exceptions, such as parricide, which was followed by loss of inheritance; sacrilege and the murder of a master by a slave, which were punished with death. It is a natural inference that, as the royal treasury was enriched by these imposts, the sovereign would hardly attempt to check the annual harvest of iniquity by which his revenue was increased. Still, although the moral sense is shocked by a system which makes the ruler's interest identical with the wickedness of his people and holds out a comparative immunity in evil doing for the rich, it was better that crime should be punished by money rather than not be punished at all.

Five centuries of isolation succeed. In the Netherlands, as throughout Europe, a thousand obscure and slender rills are slowly preparing the great stream of universal culture. Five dismal centuries of feudalism—during which period there is little talk of human right, little obedience to divine reason. Rights there are none, only forces; and, in brief, three great forces, gradually arising, developing themselves, acting upon each other, and upon the general movement of society.

The sword—the first, for a time the only force: the force of iron. The “land's master,” having acquired the property in the territory and in the people who feed thereon, distributes to his subalterns, often but a shade beneath him in power, portions of his estate, getting the use of their faithful swords in return. Vavasours subdivide again to vassals, exchanging land and cattle, human or other, against fealty, and so the iron chain of a military hierarchy, forged of mutually interdependent links, is stretched over each little province. Impregnable castles, here more numerous than in any other part of Christendom, dot the level surface of the country. Mail-clad knights, with their followers, encamp permanently upon the soil. The fortunate fable of

divine right is invented to sanction the system; superstition and ignorance give currency to the delusion.

Thus the grace of God, having conferred the property in a vast portion of Europe upon a certain idiot in France, makes him competent to sell large fragments of his estate, and to give a divine, and, therefore, most satisfactory title along with them—a great convenience to a man who had neither power, wit, nor will to keep the property in his own hands. So the Dirks of Holland get a deed from Charles the Simple, and, although the grace of God does not prevent the royal grantor himself from dying a miserable, discrowned captive, the conveyance to Dirk is none the less hallowed by almighty fiat. So the Roberts and Guys, the Johns and Baldwins, become sovereigns in Hainault, Brabant, Flanders, and other little districts, affecting supernatural sanction for the authority which their good swords have won and are ever ready to maintain. Thus organised, the force of iron asserts and exerts itself. Duke, count, seignor and vassal, knight and squire, master and man swarm and struggle amain. A wild, chaotic, sanguinary scene. Here, bishop and baron contend, centuries long, murdering human creatures by ten thousands for an acre or two of swampy pasture; there, doughty families, hugging old musty quarrels to their heart, buffet each other from generation to generation; and thus they go on, raging and wrestling among themselves, with all the world, shrieking insane war-cries which no human soul ever understood—red caps and black, white hoods and gray, Hooks and Cods, dealing destruction, building castles and burning them, tilting at tourneys, stealing bullocks, roasting Jews, robbing the highways, crusading—now upon Syrian sands against Paynim dogs, now in Frisian quagmires against Albigenses, Stedingers, and other heretics—plunging about in blood and fire, repenting, at idle times, and paying their passage through purgatory with large slices of ill-gotten gains placed in the ever-extended dead-hand of the church; acting, on the whole, according to their kind, and so getting themselves civilised or exterminated, it matters little which. Thus they play their part, those energetic men-at-arms; and thus one great force, the force of iron, spins and expands itself, century after century, helping on, as it whirls, the great progress of society towards its goal, wherever that may be.

Another force—the force clerical—the power of clerks, arises; the might of educated mind measuring itself against brute violence; a force embodied, as often before, as priestcraft—the strength of priests: craft meaning simply strength, in our old mother-tongue. This great force, too, develops itself variously, being sometimes beneficent, sometimes malignant. Priesthood works out its task, age after age: now smoothing penitent death-beds, consecrating graves, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, incarnating the Christian precepts, in an age of rapine and homicide, doing a thousand deeds of love and charity among the obscure and forsaken—deeds of which there shall never be human chronicle, but a leaf or two, perhaps, in the recording angel's book; hiving precious honey from the few flowers of gentle art which bloom upon a howling wilderness; holding up the light of science over a stormy sea; treasuring in convents and crypts the few fossils of antique learning which become visible, as the extinct Megatherium of an elder world reappears after the Gothic deluge; and now, careering in helm and hauberk with the other ruffians, bandying blows in the thickest of the fight, blasting with bell, book, and candle its trembling enemies, while sovereigns, at the head of armies, grovel in the dust and offer abject submission for the kiss of peace; exercising the same conjury over ignorant baron and cowardly hind, making the fiction of apostolic authority to bind and loose, as prolific in acres

as the other divine right to have and hold; thus the force of cultivated intellect, wielded by a chosen few and sanctioned by supernatural authority, becomes as potent as the sword.

A third force, developing itself more slowly, becomes even more potent than the rest—the power of gold. Even iron yields to the more ductile metal. The importance of municipalities, enriched by trade, begins to be felt. Commerce, the mother of Netherland freedom, and, eventually, its destroyer—even as in all human history the vivifying becomes afterwards the dissolving principle—commerce changes insensibly and miraculously the aspect of society. Clusters of hovels become towered cities; the green and gilded Hansa of commercial republicanism coils itself around the decaying trunk of feudal despotism. Cities leagued with cities throughout and beyond Christendom—empire within empire—bind themselves closer and closer in the electric chain of human sympathy and grow stronger and stronger by mutual support. Fishermen and river raftsmen become ocean adventurers and merchant princes. Commerce plucks up half-drowned Holland by the locks and pours gold into her lap. Gold wrests power from iron. Needy Flemish weavers become mighty manufacturers. Armies of workmen, fifty thousand strong, tramp through the swarming streets. Silk-makers, clothiers, brewers become the gossips of kings, lend their royal gossips vast sums, and burn the royal notes of hand in fires of cinnamon wood. Wealth brings strength, strength confidence. Learning to handle cross-bow and dagger, the burghers fear less the baronial sword, finding that their own will cut as well, seeing that great armies—flowers of chivalry—can ride away before them fast enough at battles of spurs and other encounters. Sudden riches beget insolence, tumults, civic broils. Internecine quarrels, horrible tumults stain the streets with blood, but education lifts the citizens more and more out of the original slough. They learn to tremble as little at priestcraft as at swordcraft, having acquired something of each. Gold in the end, unsanctioned by right divine, weighs up the other forces, supernatural as they are. And so, struggling along their appointed path, making cloth, making money, making treaties with great kingdoms, making war by land and sea, ringing great bells, waving great banners, they, too—these insolent, boisterous burghers—accomplish their work.

Thus, the mighty power of the purse develops itself, and municipal liberty becomes a substantial fact—a fact, not a principle; for the old thecrem of sovereignty remains undisputed as ever. Neither the nation, in mass, nor the citizens, in class, lay claim to human rights. All upper attributes—legislative, judicial, administrative—remain in the land-master's breast alone. It is an absurdity, therefore, to argue with Grotius^m concerning the unknown antiquity of the Batavian republic. The republic never existed at all till the sixteenth century, and was only born after long years of agony.^b

