

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NETHERLANDS UNDER BURGUNDY AND THE EMPIRE

[1486-1555 A.D.]

BURGUNDY, or Bourgoigne, as it is called by the French who now possess the bulk of it, has played so important and complicated a rôle in the politics of Europe that some separate account of its history is desirable. The Burgundi or Burgundiones, so called from living in *burgi* or burghs, were apparently of Gothic stock. They are first discovered between the Vistula and the Oder about 289 A.D. They defeated the Alamanni, and in 406 migrated to Gaul under Gunther, or Gundicar, who had played a large part in the election of the emperor Jovinus. The Romans compelled the Celtic Ædui to divide lands, property, and slaves with the Burgundi, whose first definite kingdom was founded between the Rhone and the Aar, where Christianity was speedily adopted. Gundicar was killed in a battle with the Gauls, and succeeded by Gunderic (436-470), whose four sons divided his realm, setting their capitals at Geneva, Besançon, Lyons, and Vienne. In 507 Gundibald reunited the fragments into one realm, and made the code known either by his name, or as the *Loi Gombette*. He was succeeded in 516 by his son Sigismund, and he by Gundimar in 524, with whom ended this Burgundian dynasty, for in 534 he was expelled and his realm absorbed in the Frankish Empire.

#### THE RISE OF BURGUNDY

After the division of Verdun in 843 the Burgundians were separated into the duchy and the realm of Burgundy. The realm itself was subdivided, and Boson founded the kingdom of Lower Burgundy or Cisjuran; while in 888, Rudolf, a Guelfic Swiss count, organised the kingdom of Upper Burgundy or Transjuran. Boson in 882 accepted Charles the Stout as overlord, and Rudolf's son, Rudolf, was eventually allowed to add Cisjuran to Transjuran in 933, in exchange for his rights to the Italian crown. The united kingdom, often known as Arles or the Arelatian Kingdom, was governed by a line of princes who rivalled and often overbore the Carolingian rulers. But in 1033 it was absorbed into the German Empire by Conrad II.

Meanwhile, Boson's brother, Richard, had given his allegiance to Charles the Bald, and received from the French king the so-called duchy of Burgundy.

It was reunited to the French crown from 1002 to 1032, when Henry I transferred it to his brother, Robert the Old, whose descendants held it for the older Capetian line till 1361, when the French king, John the Good, seized it.

But in the defeat of Poitiers he was taken prisoner by the English; in that disgraceful rout, his youngest son, Philip the Bold (*le hardi*), duke of Touraine, was the only one of the sons to defend his father with his sword. In gratitude he gave the youth the duchy of Burgundy with the rank of a first peer of France. Barante,<sup>b</sup> in his history of the Burgundian dukes, quotes the old charter which justifies the grant "for the reason that the said Philip, of his own free will, exposed himself to death with us, and, all wounded as he was, remained steadfast and fearless throughout the battle of Poitiers."

It was a kingly reward for princely valour, but the consequences were not happy. As Martin<sup>c</sup> says: "John as a farewell to his realm left an act that crowned all his faults — the alienation of the duchy of Burgundy, which had just been so happily reunited to the crown. The sage policy of Louis the Fat, of Philip Augustus, and of St. Louis was very remote. The insensate Valois voluntarily loosened the structure of the monarchy, to constitute this fatal oligarchy of the 'sires of the fleurs-de-lis,' which renewed the grand feudalism and upset France for a century."

It was not till 1364 that Philip the Bold came into full possession of the duchy; in that year he entered his capital, Dijon, in state. His brother, Charles V of France, enlarged his power by giving him the stadholdership of the Île-de-France, and arranging his marriage with Margaret of Flanders. Later he acquired from her inheritance also Artois and the countship of Burgundy, known later as the Franche-Comté, uniting two of the most important French fiefs in the hands of a new power destined to rival and threaten the French crown.<sup>a</sup>

#### PHILIP THE BOLD

Thus the house of Burgundy, which soon after became so formidable and celebrated, obtained this vast accession to its power. The various changes which had taken place in the neighbouring provinces during the continuance of these civil wars had altered the state of Flanders altogether. John d'Avesnes, count of Hainault, having also succeeded in 1299 to the county of Holland, the two provinces, though separated by Flanders and Brabant, remained from that time under the government of the same chief, who soon became more powerful than the bishops of Utrecht, or even than their formidable rivals the Frisians.

During the wars which desolated these opposing territories, in consequence of the perpetual conflicts for superiority, the power of the various towns insensibly became at least as great as that of the nobles to whom they were constantly opposed. The commercial interests of Holland, also, were considerably advanced by the influx of Flemish merchants forced to seek refuge there from the convulsions which agitated their province. Every day confirmed and increased the privileges of the people of Brabant; while at Liège the inhabitants gradually began to gain the upper hand, and to shake off the former subjection to their sovereign bishops.

Although Philip of Burgundy became count of Flanders, by the death of his father-in-law, in the year 1384, it was not till the following year that he concluded a peace with the people of Ghent, and entered into quiet possession of the province. In the same year the duchess of Brabant, the last descendant of the duke of that province, died, leaving no nearer relative

than the duchess of Burgundy; so that Philip obtained in right of his wife this new and important accession to his dominions.

But the consequent increase of the sovereign's power was not, as is often the case, injurious to the liberties or happiness of the people. Philip continued to govern in the interest of the country, which he had the good sense to consider as identified with his own. He augmented the privileges of the towns, and negotiated for the return into Flanders of those merchants who had emigrated to Germany and Holland during the continuance of the civil wars. He thus by degrees accustomed his new subjects, so proud of their rights, to submit to his authority; and his peaceable reign was only disturbed by the fatal issue of the expedition of his son, John the Fearless, count de Nevers, against the Turks. This young prince, filled with ambition and temerity, was offered the command of the force sent by Charles VI of France to the assistance of Sigismund of Hungary in his war against Bajazet. Followed by a numerous body of nobles, he entered on the contest, and was defeated and taken prisoner by the Turks at the battle of Nicopoli. His army was totally destroyed, and himself only restored to liberty on the payment of an immense ransom.

John the Fearless succeeded in 1404 to the inheritance of all his father's dominions, with the exception of Brabant, of which his younger brother, Anthony of Burgundy, became duke. John, whose ambitious and ferocious character became every day more strongly developed, now aspired to the government of France during the insanity of his cousin Charles VI. He occupied himself little with the affairs of the Netherlands, from which he only desired to draw supplies of men. But the Flemings, taking no interest in his personal views or private projects, and equally indifferent to the rivalry of England and France, which now began so fearfully to afflict the latter kingdom, forced their ambitious count to declare their province a neutral country; so that the English merchants were admitted as usual to trade in all the ports of Flanders, and the Flemings equally well received in England; while the duke made open war against that country in his quality of a prince of France and sovereign of Burgundy. This is probably the earliest well-established instance of such a distinction between the prince and the people.

Anthony, duke of Brabant, the brother of Philip, was not so closely restricted in his authority and wishes. He led all the nobles of the province to take part in the quarrels of France; and he suffered the penalty of his rashness, in meeting his death in the battle of Agincourt. But the duchy suffered nothing by this event, for the militia of the country had not followed their duke and his nobles to the war; and a national council was now established, consisting of eleven persons, two of whom were ecclesiastics, three barons, two knights, and four commoners. This council, formed on principles so fairly popular, conducted the public affairs with great wisdom during the minority of the young duke. Each province seems thus to have governed itself upon principles of republican independence. The sovereigns could not at discretion, or by the want of it, play the bloody game of war for their mere amusement; and the emperor putting in his claim at this epoch to his ancient rights of sovereignty over Brabant, as an imperial fief, the council and the people treated the demand with derision.

John the Fearless, after having caused the murder of his rival the duke of Orleans, was himself assassinated, on the bridge of Montereau, by the followers of the dauphin of France, and in his presence. Philip duke of Burgundy, the son and successor of John, had formed a close alliance with Henry V, to revenge his father's murder; and soon after the death of the

[1419-1436 A.D.]

king Philip married his sister, and thus united himself still more nearly to the celebrated John duke of Bedford, brother of Henry, and regent of France, in the name of his infant nephew, Henry VI. But besides the share on which he reckoned in the spoils of France, Philip also looked with a covetous eye on the inheritance of Jacqueline of Holland, his cousin. Her death in 1436, at the age of thirty-six, removed all restraint from Philip's thirst for aggrandisement, in the indulgence of which he drowned his remorse. As if fortune had conspired for the rapid consolidation of his greatness, the death of Philip count of Saint Pol, who had succeeded his brother John in the dukedom of Brabant, gave him the sovereignty of that extensive province; and his dominions soon extended to the very limits of Picardy, by the Peace of Arras, concluded with the dauphin, now become Charles VII, and by his finally contracting a strict alliance with France.

Philip of Burgundy, thus become sovereign of dominions at once so extensive and compact, had the precaution and address to obtain from the emperor a formal renunciation of his existing though almost nominal rights as lord paramount. He next purchased the title of the duchess of Luxemburg to that duchy; and thus the states of the house of Burgundy gained an extent about equal to that of the existing kingdom of the Netherlands. For although on the north and east they did not include Friesland, the bishopric of Utrecht, Gelderland, or the province of Liège, still on the south and west they comprised French Flanders, the Boulonnais, Artois, and a part of Picardy, besides Burgundy.<sup>d</sup>

## PHILIP AT WAR WITH ENGLAND (1436-1443)

As he equalled many of the sovereigns of Europe in the extent and excelled all of them in the riches of his dominions, so he now began to rival them in the splendour and dignity of his court. On the occasion of his marriage with Elizabeth, or Isabella, daughter of John, king of Portugal, celebrated at Bruges in January 1430, he instituted the famous order of the Golden Fleece, "to preserve the ancient religion, and to extend and defend the boundaries of the state." The number of knights, at the time of their institution, was twenty-four, besides the duke himself as president, and it was subsequently increased by the emperor Charles V to fifty-one.

The accession of a powerful and ambitious prince to the government of the county was anything but a source of advantage to the Dutch, excepting, perhaps, in a commercial point of view. Its effects were soon perceived in the declaration made by the council of Holland that the charters and privileges, acknowledged by the duke as governor and heir, were of no effect, unless afterwards confirmed by him as count. Nor was the diminution of their civil liberties the only evil which foreign dominion brought upon them. The last nation in Europe with which Holland would voluntarily wage war was perhaps England, and yet it was against her that she was now called upon to lavish her blood and treasure in an unprofitable contest.



TORCHBEARER OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

[1435-1443 A. D.]

The zeal of Philip for the English alliance had received its first check by the marriage of Jacqueline with Humphrey, duke of Gloucester; but the ready acquiescence of Humphrey in the decision of the pope, and his abandonment of his wife, had softened his resentment. The achievements of Joan of Arc changed the face of affairs, and rendered Philip less sanguine of the advantages to be reaped from the connection with England.

In 1435 he concluded a separate treaty with Charles VII. The English indignation at this treachery, as they termed it, knew no bounds. The populace of London, venting their rage indiscriminately on all the subjects of the duke of Burgundy, spared not, in the general pillage, even the houses of the Holland and Zealand merchants then residing in England, several of whom they seized and murdered. This served but to strengthen the determination that the duke had already formed of declaring war against England, which he did in the following year (1436). He opened the campaign with the siege of Calais, which the cowardice or disaffection of his Flemish troops,<sup>1</sup> and the backwardness of the Hollanders in bringing a fleet to his assistance, soon forced him to raise.

While the Hollanders manifested their unwillingness to take part in this unpopular war, the seditious state of the Flemish towns, caused by the imposition of a tax on salt, rendered Philip unable to prevent the ravages of the duke of Gloucester's army, which, marching from Calais, overran Flanders and Hainault (1437). The same cause embarrassed all his future operations against the English, and he was at length forced by his rebellious subjects to supplicate the king of England, through his wife, Isabella of Portugal, for the re-establishment of the commerce between the English and the Dutch and Flemings. This requisition, being granted, was followed by negotiations for a truce, which, prolonged until the year 1443, were at length concluded, and the peace was agreed upon. During the war between Burgundy and England, the Hollanders were engaged in hostilities more immediately on their own account with the Easterlings, or Hanse towns of the Baltic, which had plundered some of their ships.

Several sharp engagements were fought in which the Dutch generally had the advantage, though without any decisive event, until the spring of 1440, when the whole of a Hanseatic fleet was captured with little resistance. In 1441 a truce was concluded with the towns of Lübeck, Hamburg, Rostock, Stralsund, Wismar, and Lüneburg, for twelve years, within which period their differences were to be adjusted by five towns chosen by each party. This truce, being renewed from time to time, had all the beneficial effects of a regular and stable peace.

The cessation of foreign wars was, ere long, followed by the renewal of those intestine hook and cod commotions which had now for so protracted a period been the bane of Holland.

The lavish expenditure constantly maintained by the duke of Burgundy had reduced his finances to so low an ebb that he was obliged to have recourse to unpopular and even arbitrary measures, for the purpose of replenishing

[<sup>1</sup> Only with difficulty could Philip keep the grumbling Flemings with his army. When at last the moment arrived that Humphrey's fleet was really in sight, they cried loudly about the Welsh treason, burned their tents, and stole away. In the meantime, Humphrey had landed without the least opposition, with ten thousand troops; and in this dilemma Philip instantly resolved to make an ignominious retreat with the small part of his army that remained. It was a hateful blot on the escutcheon of the grand master of the order of the Golden Fleece: and the inhuman judgments which he immediately put in train and destined for the Flemish states were chiefly owing to his indignation at being compelled to make this disgraceful retreat, to which the mutinous Flemings had forced him. — WENZELBURGER.]

his treasury. Of this nature was the duty on salt, called in France the *gabelle*, a tax long established in that country, but hitherto unknown in any of the states of the Netherlands. Philip had not ventured to lay any impost of this kind upon Holland, but in Flanders he demanded eighteen pence upon every sack of salt sold there, which the citizens of Ghent absolutely refused to pay; and a new duty on grain, proposed in the next year, met in like manner with a universal and decided negative.

In the first emotions of his anger, Philip removed every member, both of the senate and great council of Ghent, from their offices; and the city being thus deprived of its magistrates, no power was left sufficiently strong to arrest the progress of sedition, for which men's minds were already too well prepared. The burghers, therefore, without delay, took an oath of mutual defence against the duke, assumed the white hood, the customary badge of revolt, elected captains of the burgher guards [*hoofdmannen*], and prepared to sustain a long siege, by laying up plentiful stores of ammunition and provisions. Several skirmishes were fought between the insurgents and the duke's forces with alternate success. The prisoners on both sides were massacred without mercy, no quarter was given, and no amount of ransom accepted.

Philip assembled an immense force, and entering Flanders in person captured Gaveren. The Ghenters marching out of Ghent to the number of 24,000, among whom were 7,000 volunteers from England, advanced to the village of Senmerssaken, within a short distance of Gaveren. On the first charge of the enemy, July 22nd, 1453, the Ghenters fled in disorder towards the Schelde, whither they were pursued by the Burgundians, when nearly the whole were slaughtered or drowned in attempting to escape by crossing the river. This overwhelming misfortune effectually broke the spirit of the insurgents.

The duke of Burgundy was so highly gratified with the alacrity which the Hollanders and Zealanders had shown (with a short-sighted policy perhaps) in lending their assistance to subdue the Ghenters, that he promised to release the people from the ten years' petition, in case of invasion, or the occurrence of a flood; and confirmed the valuable and important privilege *de non evocando* — that is, that no one should be brought to trial out of the boundaries of the county. A reservation, such as arbitrary princes have ever been fond of inserting in grants of popular privileges, that Philip himself was to be sole judge when a case of exception arose, considerably qualified this ancient right so deeply cherished by the Dutch nation.

It was during the war with the Ghenters that his son the count of Charolais, afterwards Charles the Bold, or Rash, first began to draw attention to himself.

Events now occurred in Utrecht which prepared the way for the future junction of this ecclesiastical state with the rest of the Netherlands. Philip had long desired this see for his natural son, David of Burgundy; but upon the death of the bishop, in 1455, the chapter unanimously elected Gilbert van Brederode. Philip prepared to secure by force the reception of his son in the bishopric; and for this purpose repaired to Holland to raise a general levy of troops. The Hollanders rarely failed to take advantage of a conjuncture, when their sovereigns required their support, to recover or extend their privileges; and the historian has often to admire their steady patience in waiting their opportunity — the manly but respectful earnestness with which they vindicated their claims, and the generous patriotism with which they made vast pecuniary sacrifices for the sake of their highly prized liberties.

On this occasion the West Frisians and Kennemerlanders, knowing that the duke must have recourse to their assistance, offered him a considerable sum of money for the restoration of the franchises of which they had been

deprived in 1426; the duke, in return, reinstated them in the same privileges as they had enjoyed before that time. The duke now sent an army into Utrecht. Gilbert surrendered all claim to the bishopric in favour of David of Burgundy.

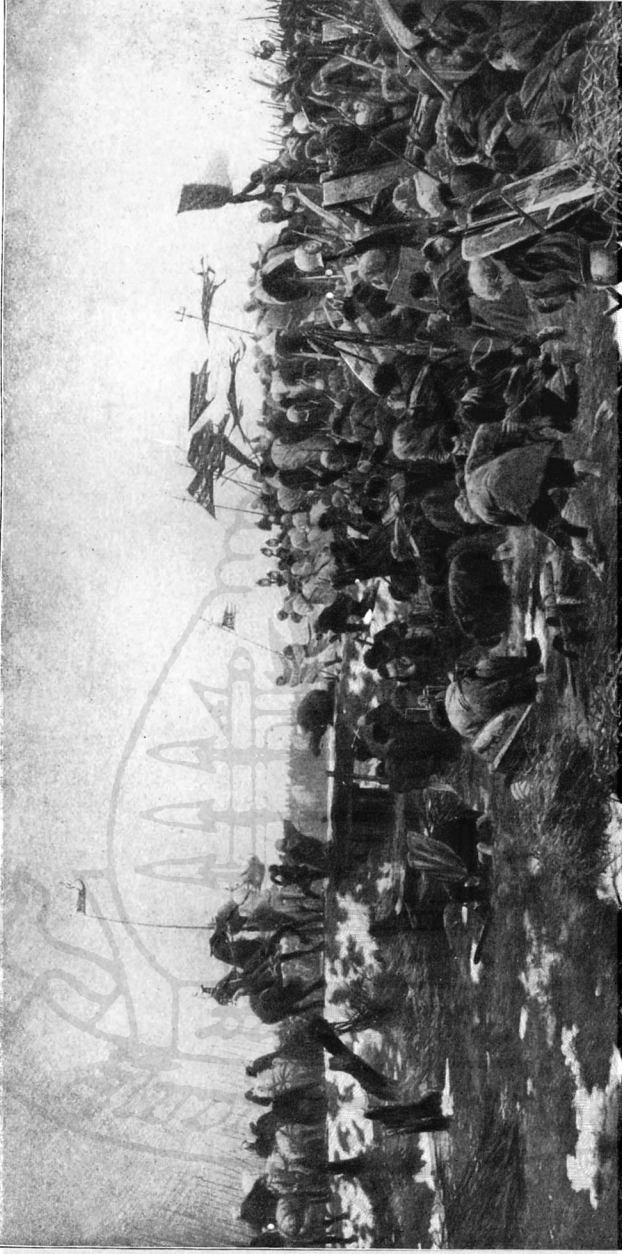
Philip, fearing the effects of the restless temper of his son at the court, had created him stadholder-general of Holland; he had since then been put in possession of several rich lordships in the county, and as he found his influence daily increasing, he began to assume a more haughty tone, and to give evident tokens of dissatisfaction with many parts of his father's government.

The relations of the house of Burgundy with Charles VII of France and his son, later Louis XI, have been so fully described in the French history, volume XI, chapters 9 and 10, that their repetition here will not be needed. It will only be necessary to remind the reader of the resemblance between the unruly and unfilial natures of the two young men, Charles and Louis, and the mutual hatred which they acquired for each other, probably in 1456, when Louis, then dauphin, fled from his father's wrath to the court of Philip of Burgundy. Later, war breaking out between France and Burgundy, Charles the Bold led his father's army to the very gates of Paris (1465), and held Louis XI at his mercy till after the conference and Treaty of Conflans.<sup>a</sup>

After the conclusion of this peace, Charles proceeded to chastise the insolence of the burghers of Liège and Dinant, who, having made an alliance with Louis on the breaking out of the war between France and Burgundy, invaded Brabant and Namur, and devastated the whole country with fire and sword. Charles, on his return from France, laid siege to Liège, defeated an army of Liègois before its walls; and the town, hopeless of assistance from Louis, surrendered on conditions. The citizens were forced to pay a fine of six hundred thousand Rhenish guilders. Dinant was taken by storm and pillaged (1466), its fortifications were razed to the ground, and eight hundred of the inhabitants drowned in the Maas, by order of Charles.

Whether or not the Hollanders took part in either of these expeditions is uncertain; but it is clear that they were by no means exempt from a share in the expenses they entailed on the states. A ten years' petition was levied on Holland and West Friesland, amounting to 55,183 crowns a year: and Zealand was taxed in the same proportion. Charles, during his residence in these provinces, had found means so greatly to increase his influence that he was little likely to meet with resistance to any of his demands, even if the example of Ghent had not afforded a severe lesson to such as might be inclined to offer it. He obtained, as we have seen, considerable baronies both in Holland and Zealand; he reduced the number of the council of state from eight-and-twenty to eight, besides the stadholder; and as he professed to choose them rather for their skill in affairs than for the nobility of their birth, they became entirely subservient to his will. He likewise deprived the council of the office of auditing the public accounts, which it had hitherto exercised, uniting the chamber of finance at the Hague with that of Brussels.

This was the first step towards a union between Holland and the rest of the Netherlands, which was afterwards partially, but never entirely, effected. Charles was recalled from Holland into Brabant in the early part of the year 1467, by the declining health of his father, who lay sick at Bruges of a quinsy, which terminated his existence on the 15th of February, in the seventy-second year of his age. He left by his wife, Isabella of Portugal, only one son, Charles. The number of his illegitimate children is said by some to have been thirty, but he made provision for no more than nineteen. Philip's



THE CITIZENS OF CASSEL SURRENDERING TO PHILIP THE GOOD

(From the painting by Francis Tattegrain, 1887, in the Lille Musée)



humanity, benevolence, affability, and strict regard to justice obtained for him the surname of Good; while his love of peace, and the advantageous treaties which the extent and importance of his dominions enabled him to make with foreign nations, tended greatly to increase the commerce of his subjects.

ART AND CULTURE OF THE PERIOD

The wealth procured by the genius and industry of the Netherlanders enabled them to sustain the heavy burdens laid upon them by Duke Philip with a comparative ease which led Comines,<sup>g</sup> a contemporary author, to suppose that they were, in fact, more lightly taxed than the subjects of other princes. As Philip, however, during the whole of his reign kept up a court which surpassed every other in Europe in luxury and magnificence, and contrived besides to amass vast sums of money, it is evident that his treasury must have been liberally supplied by his people. During his attendance on Louis XI, at Paris, when that monarch went to take possession of his kingdom, Monstrelet<sup>h</sup> says "he excited the admiration of the Parisians by the splendour of his dress, table, and equipages; the hôtel d'Artois, where he lived, was hung with the richest tapestries ever seen in France. When he rode through the streets, he wore every day some new dress, or jewel of price — the frontlet of his horse was covered with the richest jewels."



NOBLEWOMAN OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

We are told by Pontus Heuterus,<sup>i</sup> a native though not contemporary author, that Philip "received more money from his subjects than they had paid in four centuries together before; but they thought little of it, since he used no force, nor the words *sic volo, sic jubeo*."

The supposition of Comines is contradicted also by the fact that Philip excited a dangerous revolt in Ghent by the imposition of new and oppressive taxes on the Flemings; while in Holland he introduced the unprecedented and unconstitutional custom of levying petitions for a number of years together. He left, at his death, a treasure amounting to four hundred thousand crowns of gold and one hundred thousand marks of silver, with pictures, jewels, and furniture, supposed to be worth two millions more. The necessary expenses of the government must have been comparatively small, and the principal portion of the large sums Philip drew into his treasury was expended on his private pleasures, or in festivals, shows, and entertainments.

The example of prodigality set by the sovereign infected his whole court: the nobles vied with each other in squandering their incomes upon articles of effeminate luxury, or puerile ostentation; and the poverty they thus entailed upon themselves and their posterity was made a subject of bitter reproach to them under his successors.

The same cause retarded in Holland the progress of literature and the arts,

which in Flanders and Brabant, under the munificent patronage and encouragement of Philip, were making rapid advances: the Dutch had no name to oppose to that of Jan van Eyck, of Bruges, who, in the early part of this century, marked out an era in the annals of painting by his invention of oil colours: and it is in the works of foreigners and Flemings, as contemporary historians, of Monstrelet, Roya, and Comines, that we must seek for the passing notices of a country which had produced a John of Leyden and a Melis Stoke. The beneficial effects of printing in the general advancement of learning and civilisation were not as yet perceived, since the expense of printed books being hitherto little less than that of manuscripts, the possession of them was still confined to the wealthy few. The honour of this invention is, as it is well known, disputed between Mainz and Haarlem.

#### CHARLES THE BOLD (1467-1477)

Charles began his career by seizing on all the money and jewels left by his father; he next dismissed the crowd of useless functionaries who had fed upon, under the pretence of managing, the treasures of the state. But this salutary and sweeping reform was only effected to enable the sovereign to pursue uncontrolled the most fatal of all passions, that of war. Nothing can better paint the true character of this haughty and impetuous prince than his crest (a branch of holly), and his motto, "Who touches it, pricks himself." Charles had conceived a furious and not ill-founded hatred for his base yet formidable neighbour and rival, Louis XI of France.

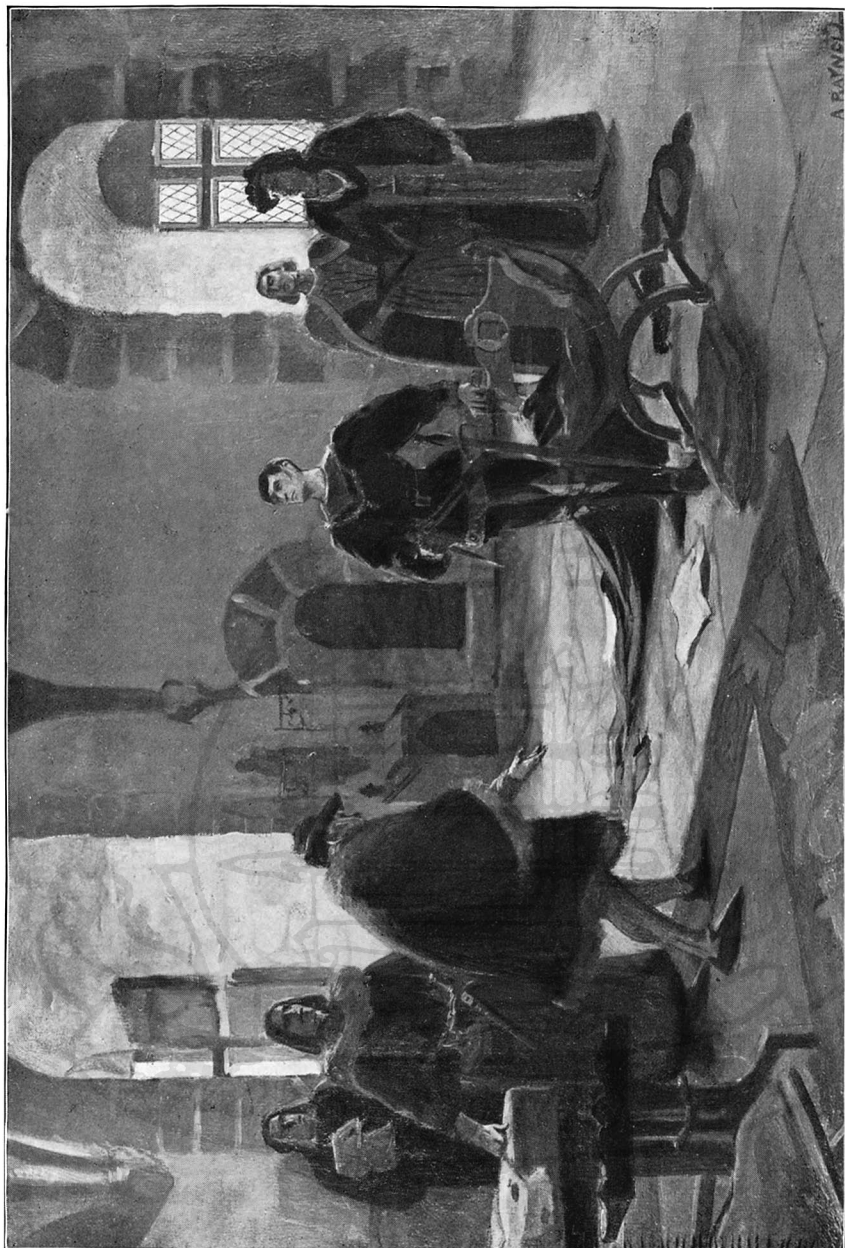
Charles was the proudest, most daring, and most unmanageable prince that ever made the sword the type and the guarantee of greatness; Louis the most subtle, dissimulating, and treacherous king that ever wore in his closet a tissue of hollow diplomacy and bad faith in government. The struggle between these sovereigns was unequal only in respect to this difference of character; for France, subdivided as it still was, and exhausted by the wars with England, was not comparable, either as regarded men, money, or the other resources of the state, to the compact and prosperous dominions of Burgundy.

Charles showed some symptoms of good sense and greatness of mind, soon after his accession to power, that gave a false colouring to his disposition, and encouraged illusory hopes as to his future career. Scarcely was he proclaimed count of Flanders at Ghent, when the populace, surrounding his hotel, absolutely insisted on and extorted his consent to the restitution of their ancient privileges. Furious as Charles was at this bold proof of insubordination, he did not revenge it; and he treated with equal indulgence the city of Mechlin, which had expelled its governor and rased the citadel. The people of Liège, having revolted against their bishop, Louis of Bourbon, who was closely connected with the house of Burgundy, were defeated by the duke in 1467, but he treated them with clemency; and immediately after this event, in February, 1468, he concluded with Edward IV<sup>1</sup> of England an alliance, offensive and defensive, against France.

Louis demanded an explanatory conference with Charles, and the town of Péronne in Picardy was fixed on for their meeting.<sup>2</sup> Louis, willing to imitate the boldness of his rival, who had formerly come to meet him in the very midst of his army, now came to the rendezvous almost alone. But he was severely mortified, and near paying a greater penalty than fright, for this

[<sup>1</sup> He also married the king's sister, Margaret of York.]

[<sup>2</sup> A full account of this famous interview by Comines, who was present, is given in volume XI.]



MEETING BETWEEN LOUIS XI AND CHARLES THE BOLD

(From the painting by Raynold)

hazardous conduct. The duke, having received intelligence of a new revolt at Liège excited by some of the agents of France, instantly made Louis prisoner, in defiance of every law of honour or fair dealing. The excess of his rage and hatred might have carried him to a more disgraceful extremity, had not Louis, by force of bribery, gained over some of his most influential counsellors, who succeeded in appeasing his rage. He contented himself with humiliating, when he was disposed to punish. He forced his captive to accompany him to Liège, and witness the ruin of this unfortunate town, which he delivered over to plunder; and having given this lesson to Louis, he set him at liberty.

From this period there was a marked and material change in the conduct of Charles. He had been previously moved by sentiments of chivalry and notions of greatness. But sullied by his act of public treachery and violence towards the monarch who had, at least in seeming, manifested unlimited confidence in his honour, a secret sense of shame embittered his feelings and soured his temper. He became so insupportable to those around him that he was abandoned by several of his best officers, and even by his natural brother, Baldwin of Burgundy, who passed over to the side of Louis. Charles was at this time embarrassed by the expense of entertaining and maintaining Edward IV and numerous English exiles, who were forced to take refuge in the Netherlands by the successes of the earl of Warwick, who had replaced Henry VI on the throne. He then entered France at the head of his army, to assist the duke of Brittany; but he lost by his hot-brained caprice every advantage within his easy reach.

But he soon afterwards acquired the duchy of Gelderland from the old duke Arnold van Egmond, who had been temporarily despoiled of it by his son Adolphus. It was almost a hereditary consequence in this family that the children should revolt and rebel against their parents. Adolphus had the effrontery to found his justification on the argument that, his father having reigned forty-four years, he was fully entitled to his share — a fine practical authority for greedy and expectant heirs. The old father replied to this reasoning by offering to meet his son in single combat. Charles cut short the affair by making Adolphus prisoner and seizing on the disputed territory, for which he, however, paid Arnold the sum of 220,000 florins.<sup>d</sup>

Thus the whole of the Netherlands, with the exception of Friesland, was at this time under the dominion of the house of Burgundy; but the possession of Gelderland, which Charles so eagerly coveted, entailed a long and ruinous war upon his successors.

The favourite object of Charles' ambition was now to be ranked among the sovereigns of Europe, and to revive in his own person the ancient title of king of Burgundy.<sup>1</sup> He obtained the emperor's consent to invest him with this much-desired dignity by promising his only daughter and sole heiress, Mary, in marriage to Maximilian, son of Frederick, and a meeting at Treves was agreed upon between the two princes. Both repaired thither at the time appointed, with a splendid retinue; the crown, the sceptre, and the chair of state were already prepared, when the emperor insisted that the marriage of his son with Lady Mary should be first solemnised: suspecting, not without reason, that Charles, when once crowned, would never fulfil his part of the engagement, since he had often been heard to say that, on the day of his daughter's marriage, he would shave his head and become a monk. Charles was equally determined that the coronation should precede the marriage;

<sup>1</sup> He, however, possessed no part of the ancient kingdom of Burgundy, which comprised Franche-Comté, Dauphiné, Provence, Lyonnais, Savoy, Brescia, and great part of Switzerland.

and the coldness and mistrust which this dispute created in the mind of Frederick was so great that he suddenly quitted Treves, leaving the duke overwhelmed with confusion and anger, an object at once of derision and suspicion to the German princes.

Thus defeated in his favourite project, Charles was now obliged to turn his ambitious views to another quarter, and since he could not raise his states to a kingdom, he sought to extend them still more widely, by the possession of all the fortified places on the left side of the Rhine, from Nimeguen, where this river enters the Netherlands, to Bâle on the confines of Switzerland.

Charles, urged on by the double motive of thirst for aggrandisement and vexation at his late failure, attempted, under pretext of some internal dissensions, to gain possession of Cologne and its territory, which belonged to the empire; and at the same time planned the invasion of France, in concert with his brother-in-law Edward IV, who had recovered possession of England. But the town of Neuss, in the archbishopric of Cologne, occupied him a full year before its walls (1474-5). The emperor, who came to its succour, actually besieged the besiegers in their camp; and the dispute was terminated by leaving it to the arbitration of the pope's legate, and placing the contested town in his keeping. This half triumph gained by Charles saved Louis wholly from destruction. Edward, who had landed in France with a numerous force, seeing no appearance of his Burgundian allies, made peace with Louis; and Charles, who arrived in all haste, but not till after the treaty was signed, upbraided and abused the English king, and turned a warm friend into an inveterate enemy.

Louis, whose crooked policy had so far succeeded on all occasions, now seemed to favour Charles' plans of aggrandisement, and to recognise his pretended right to Lorraine, which legitimately belonged to the empire, and the invasion of which by Charles would be sure to set him at variance with the whole of Germany. The infatuated duke, blind to the ruin to which he was thus hurrying, marched against and soon overcame Lorraine. Thence he turned his army against the Swiss, who were allies to the conquered province, but who sent the most submissive dissuasions to the invader. They begged for peace, assuring Charles that their romantic but sterile mountains were not altogether worth the bridles of his splendidly equipped cavalry. But the more they humbled themselves, the higher was his haughtiness raised. It appeared that he had at this period conceived the project of uniting in one common conquest the ancient dominions of Lothair I, who had possessed the whole of the countries traversed by the Rhine, the Rhone, and the Po; and he even spoke of passing the Alps, like Hannibal, for the invasion of Italy.

Switzerland was, by moral analogy as well as physical fact, the rock against which these extravagant projects were shattered. The army of Charles, which engaged the hardy mountaineers in the gorges of the Alps near the town of Granson (1476), was literally crushed to atoms by the stones and fragments of granite detached from the heights and hurled down upon their heads. Charles, after this defeat, returned to the charge six weeks later, having rallied his army and drawn reinforcements from Burgundy. But Louis had despatched a body of cavalry to the Swiss — a force in which they were before deficient; and thus augmented, their army amounted to thirty-four thousand men. They took up a position, skilfully chosen, on the borders of the Lake of Morat, where they were attacked by Charles at the head of sixty thousand soldiers of all ranks. The result was the total defeat of the latter, with the loss of ten thousand killed whose bones, gathered into an immense heap,

and bleaching in the winds, remained for above three centuries — a terrible monument of rashness and injustice on the one hand, and of patriotism and valour on the other.

Charles was now plunged into a state of profound melancholy; but he soon burst from this gloomy mood into one of renewed fierceness and fatal desperation. Nine months after the battle of Morat he re-entered Lorraine, at the head of an army not composed of his faithful militia of the Netherlands, but of those mercenaries in whom it was madness to place trust. The reinforcements meant to be despatched to him by those provinces were kept back by the artifices of the count of Campobasso, an Italian, who commanded his cavalry, and who only gained his confidence basely to betray it. René duke of Lorraine, at the head of the confederate forces, offered battle to Charles under the walls of Nancy; and the night before the combat Campobasso went over to the enemy with the troops under his command. Still Charles had the way open for retreat. Fresh troops from Burgundy and Flanders were on their march to join him; but he would not be dissuaded from his resolution to fight, and he resolved to try his fortune once more with his dispirited and shattered army. On this occasion the fate of Charles was decided, and the fortune of Louis triumphant. The rash and ill-fated duke lost both the battle and his life. His body, mutilated with wounds, was found the next day, and buried with great pomp in the town of Nancy, by the orders of the generous victor, the duke of Lorraine. Thus perished the last prince of the powerful house of Burgundy.<sup>d</sup>

*Motley's Estimate of Charles the Bold*

As a conqueror, he was signally unsuccessful; as a politician, he could outwit none but himself; it was only as a tyrant within his own ground that he could sustain the character which he chose to enact. He lost the crown, which he might have secured, because he thought the emperor's son unworthy the heiress of Burgundy; and yet, after his father's death, her marriage with that very Maximilian alone secured the possession of her paternal inheritance.

Few princes were ever a greater curse to the people whom they were allowed to hold as property. He nearly succeeded in establishing a centralised despotism upon the ruins of the provincial institutions. His sudden death alone deferred the catastrophe. His removal of the supreme court of Holland from the Hague to Mechlin, and his maintenance of a standing army, were the two great measures by which he prostrated the Netherlands. The tribunal had been remodelled by his father; the expanded authority which Philip had given to a bench of judges dependent upon himself, was an infraction of the rights of Holland. The court, however, still held its sessions in the country; and the sacred privilege — *de non evocando* — the right of every Hollander to be tried in his own land, was, at least, retained. Charles threw off the mask; he proclaimed that this council — composed of his creatures, holding office at his pleasure — should have supreme jurisdiction over all the charters of the provinces; that it was to follow his person, and derive all authority from his will. The usual seat of the court he transferred to Mechlin. It will be seen, in the sequel, that the attempt under Philip II to enforce its supreme authority was a collateral cause of the great revolution of the Netherlands.

Charles, like his father, administered the country by stadholders. From the condition of flourishing self-ruled little republics, which they had, for a

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moment, almost attained, they became departments of an ill-assorted, ill-conditioned, ill-governed realm, which was neither commonwealth nor empire, neither kingdom nor duchy, and which had no homogeneousness of population, no affection between ruler and people, small sympathies of lineage or of language.

His triumphs were but few, his fall ignominious. His father's treasure was squandered, the curse of a standing army fixed upon his people, the trade and manufactures of the country paralysed by his extortions, and he accomplished nothing. He lost his life in the forty-fourth year of his age (1477), leaving all the provinces, duchies, and lordships, which formed the miscellaneous realm of Burgundy, to his only child, the lady Mary. Thus already the countries which Philip had wrested from the feeble hand of Jacqueline had fallen to another female. Philip's own granddaughter, as young, fair, and unprotected as Jacqueline, was now sole mistress of those broad domains.

#### MARY AND THE GREAT PRIVILEGE (1477)

A crisis, both for Burgundy and the Netherlands, succeeds. Within the provinces there is an elastic rebound, as soon as the pressure is removed from them by the tyrant's death. A sudden spasm of liberty gives the whole people gigantic strength. In an instant they recover all, and more than all, the rights which they had lost. The cities of Holland, Flanders, and other provinces call a convention at Ghent. Laying aside their musty feuds, men of all parties—hooks and cods, patricians and people—move forward in phalanx to recover their national constitutions. On the other hand, Louis XI seizes Burgundy, claiming the territory for his crown, the heiress for his son.

The situation is critical for the lady Mary. As usual in such cases, appeals are made to the faithful commons. Oaths and pledges are showered upon the people, that their loyalty may be refreshed and grow green. The congress<sup>1</sup> meets at Ghent [February 3rd, 1477]. The lady Mary professes much, but she will keep her vow. The deputies are called upon to rally the country around the duchess, and to resist the fraud and force of Louis. The congress is willing to maintain the cause of its young mistress.

The result of the deliberations is the formal grant [February 11th, 1477] by Duchess Mary of the *Groot Privilegie*, or Great Privilege, the Magna Charta of Holland. Although this instrument was afterwards violated, and indeed abolished, it became the foundation of the republic. It was a recapitulation and recognition of ancient rights, not an acquisition of new privileges. It was a restoration, not a revolution. Its principal points deserve attention from those interested in the political progress of mankind:

“The duchess shall not marry without consent of the states (estates) of her provinces. All offices in her gift shall be conferred on natives only. No man shall fill two offices. No office shall be farmed. The ‘great council and supreme court of Holland’ is re-established. Causes shall be brought before it on appeal from the ordinary courts. It shall have no original jurisdiction of matters within the cognisance of the provincial and municipal tribunals. The states and cities are guaranteed in their right not to be summoned to justice beyond the limits of their territory. The cities, in com-

[<sup>1</sup> This is the first regular assembly of the states-general of the Netherlands; the county of Holland, before this time, does not appear to have sent deputies to the assemblies of the other states. In negotiations with foreign powers, it treated separately.]

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mon with all the provinces of the Netherlands, may hold diets as often and at such places as they choose.

"No new taxes shall be imposed but by consent of the provincial states. Neither the duchess nor her descendants shall begin either an offensive or defensive war without consent of the states. In case a war be illegally undertaken, the states are not bound to contribute to its maintenance. In all public and legal documents, the Netherland language shall be employed. The commands of the duchess shall be invalid, if conflicting with the privileges of a city. The seat of the supreme council is transferred from Mechlin to the Hague. No money shall be coined, nor its value raised or lowered, but by consent of the states. Cities are not to be compelled to contribute to requests which they have not voted. The sovereign shall come in person before the states, to make his request for supplies."

Here was good work. The land was rescued at a blow from the helpless condition to which it had been reduced. This summary annihilation of all the despotic arrangements of Charles was enough to raise him from his tomb. The law, the sword, the purse were all taken from the hand of the sovereign and placed within the control of parliament. Such sweeping reforms, if maintained, would restore health to the body politic. They gave, moreover, an earnest of what was one day to arrive. Certainly, for the fifteenth century, the Great Privilege was a reasonably liberal constitution. Where else upon earth, at that day, was there half so much liberty as was thus guaranteed? To no people in the world more than to the stout burghers of Flanders and Holland belongs the honour of having battled audaciously and perennially in behalf of human rights.

Similar privileges to the great charter of Holland are granted to many other provinces, especially to Flanders, ever ready to stand forward in fierce vindication of freedom. For a season all is peace and joy; but the duchess is young, weak, and a woman. There is no lack of intriguing politicians, reactionary councillors. There is a cunning old king in the distance, lying in wait, seeking what he can devour. A mission goes from the states to France. The well-known tragedy of Imbrecourt and Hugonet occurs. Envoys from the states, they dare to accept secret instructions from the duchess to enter into private negotiations with the French monarch, against their colleagues — against the great charter — against their country. Louis betrays them, thinking that policy the more expedient. They are seized in Ghent, rapidly tried, and as rapidly beheaded by the enraged burghers. All the entreaties of the lady Mary, who, dressed in mourning garments, with dishevelled hair, unloosed girdle, and streaming eyes, appears at the town-house and afterwards in the market place, humbly to intercede for her servants, are fruitless. There is no help for the juggling diplomatists. The punishment was sharp. Was it more severe and sudden than that which betrayed monarchs usually inflict? Would the Flemings, at that critical moment, have deserved their freedom had they not taken swift and signal vengeance for this first infraction of their newly recognised rights? Had it not been weakness to spare the traitors who had thus stained the childhood of the national joy at liberty regained?

Another step, and a wide one, into the great stream of European history: the lady Mary espouses the archduke Maximilian. The Netherlands are about to become Habsburg property.<sup>k</sup>

Louis XI, having frustrated the negotiations for peace, possessed himself of Arras, Thérouanne, and a large portion of Artois, but on the sea affairs were more prosperous for the Netherlanders, since the Hollanders were not



only able to protect their own commerce, but likewise to capture twenty large vessels belonging to the enemy. But the rapid advances made by Louis, who had subdued Artois and the county of Boulogne, and made himself master of Bouchain, Le Quesnoy, and Avesnes, induced the states to hasten the marriage of the duchess. Among the numerous suitors whom her late father had encouraged, the only question was now between Maximilian, son of the emperor of Germany, and the dauphin of France. But with respect to the latter — besides the probability that, from the disparity of age between the parties, the princess would despise her youthful bridegroom — who had just reached his eighth year, while Mary was now past twenty, there were many reasons of policy that rendered the marriage little desirable to the king. The contract, therefore, so abruptly broken off at Treves in 1473 was again renewed, Maximilian was summoned to repair to Ghent, and the marriage was solemnised in the month of August; not, however, with a magnificence by any means suitable to the union of the son of the emperor with the richest heiress in Europe.<sup>1</sup> It is said, indeed, that the poverty of the imperial exchequer was so excessive that the states were obliged to provide funds to defray the expenses of the bridegroom's journey into the Netherlands.<sup>f</sup>

#### MAXIMILIAN (1484-1494)

They not only supplied all his wants, but enabled him to maintain the war against Louis XI, whom they defeated at the battle of Guinegate<sup>2</sup> in Picardy in 1479 and forced to make peace on more favourable terms than they had hoped for. But these wealthy provinces were not more zealous for the national defence than bent on the maintenance of their local privileges, which Maximilian little understood, and sympathised with less. He was bred in the school of absolute despotism; and his duchess having met with a too early death by a fall from her horse in the year 1482, he could not even succeed in obtaining the nomination of guardian to his own children without passing through a year of civil war. His power being almost nominal in the northern provinces,<sup>3</sup> he vainly attempted to suppress the violence of the factions of hoods and cods. In Flanders his authority was openly resisted. The turbulent towns of that country, and particularly Bruges, taking umbrage at a government half German, half Burgundian, and altogether hateful to the people, rose up against Maximilian, seized on his person in 1488, imprisoned him in a house which still exists, and put to death his most faithful followers. But the fury of Ghent and other places becoming still more outrageous, Maximilian asked as a favour from his rebel subjects of Bruges to be guarded while a prisoner by them alone. He was then king of the Romans<sup>4</sup> and all Europe became interested in his fate. The pope addressed a brief to the

[<sup>1</sup> The simplicity ill-fitted the importance of the event. The house of Austria had won the heritage of Burgundy, and the fate of the Netherland provinces was decided for a long period. It was, however, fifteen years before Maximilian could be said to have gained the Netherlands for his race. They were fifteen hard years for the provinces as well as for Maximilian. — BLOK.]

[<sup>2</sup> This dearly bought victory deprived Maximilian of the flower of the Netherland nobility, in killed, wounded, and prisoners. The losses of the Netherlanders by sea also were very considerable. The fleet of France, under the command of Admiral Coulon, captured all the vessels engaged in the herring fishery, besides eighty large ships returning with corn from the Baltic, and carried them into the ports of Normandy. It was supposed that more injury was done to the Dutch navy in this year than during the whole of the previous century.]

[<sup>3</sup> According to the terms of the marriage treaty, his eldest son Philip succeeded to the sovereignty of the Netherlands immediately upon the death of his mother.]

[<sup>4</sup> For fuller accounts of his European relations see the history of Germany in a later volume.]

town of Bruges, demanding his deliverance. But the burghers were as inflexible as factious; and they at length released him, but not until they had concluded with him and the assembled states<sup>1</sup> a treaty, which most amply secured the enjoyment of their privileges and the pardon of their rebellion.<sup>d</sup>

Maximilian is to be regent of the other provinces; Philip, under guardianship of a council, is to govern Flanders. Moreover, a congress of all the provinces is to be summoned annually, to provide for the general welfare. Maximilian signs and swears to the treaty on the 16th of May, 1488. He swears, also, to dismiss all foreign troops within four days. Giving hostages for his fidelity, he is set at liberty. What are oaths and hostages when prerogative and the people are contending? Emperor Frederick sends to his son an army under the duke of Saxony. The oaths are broken, the hostages left to their fate. The struggle lasts a year, but, at the end of it, the Flemings are subdued. What could a single province effect, when its sister states, even liberty-loving Holland, had basely abandoned the common cause? A new treaty is made (October, 1489). Maximilian obtains uncontrolled guardianship of his son, absolute dominion over Flanders and the other provinces. The insolent burghers are severely punished for remembering that they had been freemen. The magistrates of Ghent, Bruges, and Ypres, in black garments, ungirdled, bare-headed, and kneeling, are compelled to implore the despot's forgiveness, and to pay three hundred thousand crowns of gold as its price. After this, for a brief season, order reigns in Flanders.

The course of Maximilian had been stealthy, but decided. Allying himself with the city party, he had crushed the nobles. The power thus obtained he then turned against the burghers. Step by step he had trampled out the liberties which his wife and himself had sworn to protect. He had spurned the authority of the Great Privilege, and all other charters. Burgomasters and other citizens had been beheaded in great numbers for appealing to their statutes against the edicts of the regent, for voting in favour of a general congress according to the unquestionable law. He had proclaimed that all landed estates should, in lack of heirs male, escheat to his own exchequer. He had debased the coin of the country, and thereby authorised unlimited swindling on the part of all his agents, from stadholders down to the meanest official. If such oppression and knavery did not justify the resistance of the Flemings to the guardianship of Maximilian, it would be difficult to find any reasonable course in political affairs save abject submission to authority.

[<sup>1</sup> This assembly was one of the earliest and most important signs of the growing sense of the unity of the Netherlandish interests, and the need of co-operation.]



COURT ATTENDANT OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

In 1493 Maximilian succeeds to the imperial throne, at the death of his father. In the following year his son, Philip the Handsome, now seventeen years of age, receives the homage of the different states of the Netherlands. He swears to maintain only the privileges granted by Philip and Charles of Burgundy; or their ancestors, proclaiming null and void all those which might have been acquired since the death of Charles. Holland, Zealand, and the other provinces accept him upon these conditions, thus ignominiously, and without a struggle, relinquishing the Great Privilege, and all similar charters.<sup>k</sup>

PHILIP THE HANDSOME (1494-1506)

The reign of Philip, unfortunately a short one, was rendered remarkable by two intestine quarrels, one in Friesland, the other in Gelderland. The Frisians, true to their old character, held firm to their privileges, and fought for their maintenance with heroic courage. Albert of Saxony, furious at this resistance, had the horrid barbarity to cause to be impaled the chief burghers of the town of Leeuwarden, which he had taken by assault. But he himself died in the year 1500, without succeeding in his projects of an ambition unjust in its principle and atrocious in its practice.

The war of Gelderland was of a totally different nature. In this case it was not a question of popular resistance to a tyrannical nomination, but of patriotic fidelity to the reigning family. Adolphus, the duke who had de-throned his father, had died in Flanders, leaving a son who had been brought up almost a captive as long as Maximilian governed the states of his inheritance. This young man, called Charles van Egmond, who is honoured in the history of his country under the title of the Achilles of Gelderland, fell into the hands of the French during the combat in which he made his first essay in arms. The towns of Gelderland unanimously joined to pay his ransom; and, as soon as he was at liberty, they one and all proclaimed him duke. The emperor, Philip, and the German diet in vain protested against this measure, and declared Charles a usurper. We cannot follow this warlike prince in the long series of adventures which consolidated his power; nor stop to depict his daring adherents on land, who caused the whole of Holland to tremble at their deeds; nor his pirates — the chief of whom, Long Peter, called himself king of the Zuyder Zee. But amidst all the consequent troubles of such a struggle, it is marvellous to find Charles of Egmond upholding his country in a state of high prosperity, and leaving it at his death almost as rich as Holland itself.

The incapacity of Philip the Handsome doubtless contributed to cause him the loss of this portion of his dominions. This prince, after his first acts of moderation and good sense, was remarkable only as being the father of Charles V (born in 1500). The remainder of his life was worn out in undignified pleasures; and he died, in the year 1506, at Burgos in Castile, whither he had repaired to pay a visit to his brother-in-law, the king of Spain.<sup>1</sup>

[<sup>1</sup> A handsome profligate, devoted to his pleasures and leaving the cares of state to his ministers, Philip, "*croit-conseil*," is the bridge over which the house of Habsburg passes to almost universal monarchy; but, in himself, he is nothing. Two prudent marriages, made by Austrian archdukes within twenty years, have altered the face of the earth. The stream, which we have been tracing from its source, empties itself at last into the ocean of a world-empire. Count Dirk I, lord of a half-submerged corner of Europe, is succeeded by Count Charles II of Holland, better known as Charles V, king of Spain, Sicily, and Jerusalem, duke of Milan, emperor of Germany, dominator in Asia and Africa, autocrat of half the world. — MOTLEY.<sup>k</sup>]

MARGARET, GOVERNESS FOR CHARLES V (1506-1530)

Philip being dead and his wife, Juana of Spain, having become mad<sup>1</sup> from grief at his loss, after nearly losing her senses from jealousy during his life, the regency of the Netherlands reverted to Maximilian, who immediately named his daughter Margaret governante of the country [in the name of Charles, who was only six years old]. This princess, scarcely twenty-seven years of age, had been, like the celebrated Jacqueline of Bavaria, already three times married, and was now again a widow. Her first husband, Charles VIII of France, had broken from his contract of marriage before its consummation; her second, the infante of Spain, died immediately after their union; and her third, the duke of Savoy, left her again a widow after three years of wedded life. She was a woman of talent and courage; both proved by the couplet she composed for her own epitaph, at the very moment of a dangerous accident which happened during her journey into Spain to join her second affianced spouse.<sup>2</sup> She was received with the greatest joy by the people of the Netherlands; and she governed them as peaceably as circumstances allowed. Supported by England, she firmly maintained her authority against the threats of France; and she carried on in person all the negotiations between Louis XII, Maximilian, the pope Julius II, and Ferdinand of Aragon, for the famous League of Venice. She also succeeded in repressing the rising pretensions of Charles van Egmond; and, assisted by the interference of the king of France, she obliged him to give up some places in Holland which he illegally held.

From this period the alliance between England and Spain raised the commerce and manufactures of the southern provinces of the Netherlands to a high degree of prosperity, while the northern parts of the country were still kept down by their various dissensions. Holland was at war with Denmark and the Hanseatic towns [1510-1511]. The Frisians continued to struggle for freedom against the heirs of Albert of Saxony. Utrecht was at variance with its bishop, and finally recognised Charles van Egmond as its protector. The consequence of all these causes was that the south took the start in a course of prosperity which was, however, soon to become common to the whole nation.

A new rupture with France, in 1513, united Maximilian, Margaret, and Henry VIII of England in one common cause. An English and Belgian army, in which Maximilian figured as a spectator (taking care to be paid by England), marched for the destruction of Thérouanne, and defeated and dispersed the French at the second "battle of the Spurs." But Louis XII soon persuaded Henry to make a separate peace; and the unconquerable duke of Gelderland made Margaret and the emperor pay the penalty of their success against France. He pursued his victories in Friesland, and forced the country to recognise him as stadholder of Groningen, its chief town; while the duke of Saxony at length renounced to another his unjust claim on a territory which engulfed both his armies and his treasure.

[<sup>1</sup> See the history of Spain for a fuller account of these matters.]

<sup>2</sup> *Ci-gît Margot la gente demoiselle,  
Qui eut deux maris, et se mourut pucelle.*

Here gentle Margot quietly is laid,  
Who had two husbands, and yet died a maid.

## CHARLES V (1515-1555)

About the same epoch (1515), young Charles, son of Philip the Handsome, having just attained his fifteenth year, was inaugurated duke of Brabant and count of Flanders and Holland, having purchased the presumed right of Saxony to the sovereignty of Friesland. In the following year he was recognised as prince of Castile, in right of his mother, who associated him with herself in the royal power — a step which soon left her merely the title of queen. Charles procured the nomination of bishop of Utrecht for Philip, bastard of Burgundy, which made that province completely dependent on him. But this event was also one of general and lasting importance on another account.

*The Reformation*

This Philip of Burgundy was deeply affected by the doctrines of the Reformation, which had burst forth in Germany. He held in abhorrence the observances of the Roman church, and set his face against the celibacy



HEAD-DRESSES OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

of the clergy. His example soon influenced his whole diocese, and the new notions on points of religion became rapidly popular. It was chiefly, however, in Friesland that the people embraced the opinions of Luther, which were quite conformable to many of the local customs. The celebrated Edzard count of East Friesland openly adopted the Reformation; while Erasmus of Rotterdam, without

actually pronouncing himself a disciple of Lutheranism, effected more than all its advocates to throw the abuses of Catholicism into discredit.

The refusal of the dignity of emperor by Frederick "the wise," duke of Saxony, to whom it was offered by the electors, was also an event highly favourable to the new opinions; for Francis I of France, and Charles, already king of Spain and sovereign of the Netherlands, both claiming the succession to the empire, a sort of interregnum deprived the disputed dominions of a chief who might lay the heavy hand of power on the new-springing doctrines of Protestantism. At length the intrigues of Charles and his pretensions as grandson of Maximilian, having caused him to be chosen emperor,<sup>1</sup> a desperate rivalry resulted between him and the French king, which for a while absorbed his whole attention and occupied all his power.

War was declared on frivolous pretexts in 1521. Francis being obstinately bent on the conquest of the Milanese, he fell into the hands of the imperial troops at the battle of Pavia in 1525. Charles' dominions in the Netherlands suffered severely from the naval operations during the war; for the French cruisers having, on repeated occasions, taken, pillaged, and almost destroyed the principal resources of the herring fishery, Holland and Zeeland felt considerable distress, which was still further augmented by the famine which desolated these provinces in 1524.

While such calamities afflicted the northern portion of the Netherlands,

[<sup>1</sup> Maximilian died January, 1519, and Francis I disputed with Charles the right to succeed him.]

[1527-1555 A.D.]

Flanders and Brabant continued to flourish, in spite of temporary embarrassments. The bishop of Utrecht having died, his successor found himself engaged in a hopeless quarrel with his new diocese, already more than half converted to Protestantism; and to gain a triumph over these enemies, even by the sacrifice of his dignity, he ceded to the emperor in 1527 the whole of his temporal power. The duke of Gelderland, who then occupied the city of Utrecht, redoubled his hostility at this intelligence; and after having ravaged the neighbouring country, he did not lay down his arms till the subsequent year, having first procured an honourable and advantageous peace. One year more saw the term of this long-continued state of warfare by the Peace of Canbray, between Charles and Francis, which was signed on the 5th of August, 1529.<sup>1</sup>

The perpetual quarrels of Charles V with Francis I and Charles of Gelderland<sup>2</sup> led, as may be supposed, to a repeated state of exhaustion, which forced the princes to pause, till the people recovered strength and resources. Charles rarely appeared in the Netherlands — fixing his residence chiefly in Spain, and leaving to his sister the regulation of those distant provinces. One of his occasional visits was for the purpose of inflicting a terrible example upon them. The people of Ghent, suspecting an improper or imprudent application of the funds they had furnished for a new campaign, a sedition was the result. On this occasion, Charles formed the daring resolution of crossing the kingdom of France, to take promptly into his own hands the settlement of this affair — trusting to the generosity of his scarcely reconciled enemy not to abuse the confidence with which he risked himself in his power. Ghent, taken by surprise [1540], did not dare to oppose the entrance of the emperor, when he appeared before the walls; and the city was punished with extreme severity. Twenty-seven leaders of the sedition were beheaded; the principal privileges of the city were withdrawn; and a citadel was built to hold it in check for the future.

The Dutch and the Zealanders signalled themselves beyond all his other subjects on the occasion of two expeditions which Charles undertook against Tunis and Algiers in 1541. The two northern provinces furnished a greater number of ships than the united quotas of all the rest of his states. But though Charles' gratitude did not lead him to do anything in return as peculiarly favourable to these provinces, he obtained for them nevertheless a great advantage in making himself master of Friesland and Gelderland on the death of Charles van Egmond.<sup>3</sup> His acquisition of the latter, which took place in 1543, put an end to the domestic wars of the northern provinces.

Towards the end of his career, Charles redoubled his severities against the Protestants, and even introduced a modified species of inquisition into the Netherlands, but with little effect towards the suppression of the reformed doctrines. The misunderstandings between his only son Philip and Mary of England, whom he induced to marry, and the unamiable disposition of this young prince, tormented him almost as much as he was humiliated by the victories of Henry II of France, the successor of Francis I, and the successful dissimulation of Maurice elector of Saxony, by whom he was completely outwitted, deceived, and defeated. Impelled by these motives, and others, perhaps, which are and must ever remain unknown, Charles at length decided

[<sup>1</sup> By this treaty France surrendered the claim of suzerainty over Flanders and Artois. A year later Margaret died. Her sway had been in many ways beneficial. Charles made a visit to the Netherlands, in which he wheedled many concessions from the states assembled in 1531, and appointed as governess his sister Mary, widow of King Louis II of Hungary.]

[<sup>2</sup> In 1528 the Gelderland troops sacked and burned the Hague.]

[<sup>3</sup> In 1540 Utrecht also was finally united with Holland.]

on abdicating the whole of his immense possessions. He chose the city of Brussels as the scene of the solemnity, and the day fixed for it was the 25th of October, 1555.<sup>1</sup> It took place accordingly, in the presence of an immense assemblage of nobles from various countries. Charles resigned the empire to his brother Ferdinand, already king of the Romans; and all the rest of his dominions to his son Philip II. Soon after the ceremony, Charles embarked from Zealand on his voyage to Spain. He retired to the monastery of San Yuste, near the town of Plasencia, in Estremadura. He entered this retreat in February, 1556, and died there on the 21st of September, 1558, in the fifty-ninth year of his age. The last six months of his existence, contrasted with the daring vigour of his former life, formed a melancholy picture of timidity and superstition.<sup>d</sup>

#### *Marcy's Estimate of Charles V*

What was the emperor Charles to the inhabitants of the Netherlands that they should weep for him? His conduct towards them during his whole career had been one of unmitigated oppression. What to them were all these forty voyages by sea and land,<sup>2</sup> these journeyings back and forth from Friesland to Tunis, from Madrid to Vienna? The interests of the Netherlands had never been even a secondary consideration with their master. He had fulfilled no duty towards them: he had committed the gravest crimes against them. He had regarded them merely as a treasury upon which to draw; while the sums which he extorted were spent upon ceaseless and senseless wars, which were of no more interest to them than if they had been waged in another planet. Of five millions of gold annually, which he derived from all his realms, two millions came from these industrious and opulent provinces, while but a half million came from Spain and another half from the Indies. The mines of wealth which had been opened by the hand of industry in that slender territory of ancient morass and thicket<sup>3</sup> contributed four times as much income to the imperial exchequer as all the boasted wealth of Mexico and Peru. Yet the artisans, the farmers, and the merchants, by whom these riches were produced, were consulted about as much in the expenditure of the imposts upon their industry as were the savages of America as to the distribution of the mineral treasures of their soil. They paid 1,200,000 crowns a year regularly; they paid in five years an extraordinary subsidy of eight millions of ducats, and the states were roundly rebuked by the courtly representatives of their despot if they presumed to inquire into the objects of the appropriations, or to express an interest in their judicious administration. Yet it may be supposed to have been a matter of indifference to them whether Francis or Charles had won the day at Pavia, and it certainly was not a cause of triumph to the daily increasing thousands of religious reformers

[<sup>1</sup> See the histories of Spain and Germany. At the same time the governess Mary resigned the office she had held for twenty-five years.]

[<sup>2</sup> See the history of Spain, vol. X, Chapter 8, where the enormous drain Charles V made on the Spanish treasury will be found similar to his draughts on the Netherlands.]

<sup>3</sup> Badovaro<sup>1</sup> estimated the annual value of butter and cheese produced in those meadows which Holland had rescued from the ocean at eight hundred thousand crowns, a sum which, making allowance for the difference in the present value of money from that which it bore in 1557, would represent nearly eight millions. In agriculture, commerce, and manufactures, the Netherlands were the foremost nation in the world. The fabrics of Arras, Tournay, Brussels, Louvain, Ghent, and Bruges were entirely unrivalled. Antwerp was the great commercial metropolis of Christendom. "*Aversa*," says Badovaro, "*e stimata la maggiore piazza del Mondo — si può credere quanto sia la somma si afferma passare 40 milioni d'oro l'anno, quelli che incontanto girano.*"

in Holland and Flanders that their brethren had been crushed by the emperor at Mühlberg.

But it was not alone that he drained their treasure and hampered their industry. He was in constant conflict with their ancient and dearly-bought political liberties. Like his ancestor Charles the Bold, he was desirous of constructing a kingdom out of the provinces. He was disposed to place all their separate and individual charters on a Procrustean bed, and shape them all into uniformity simply by reducing the whole to a nullity.<sup>1</sup> The difficulties in the way, the stout opposition offered by burghers whose fathers had gained these charters with their blood, and his want of leisure during the vast labours which devolved upon him as the autocrat of so large a portion of the world, caused him to defer indefinitely the execution of his plan. He found time only to crush some of the foremost of the liberal institutions of the provinces in detail. He found the city of Tournay a happy, thriving, self-governed little republic in all its local affairs; he destroyed its liberties, without a tolerable pretext, and reduced it to the condition of a Spanish or Italian provincial town. His memorable chastisement of Ghent for having dared to assert its ancient rights of self-taxation has been already narrated. Many other instances might be adduced, if it were not a superfluous task, to prove that Charles was not only a political despot, but most arbitrary and cruel in the exercise of his despotism.

But if his sins against the Netherlands had been only those of financial and political oppression, it would be at least conceivable, although certainly not commendable, that the inhabitants should have regretted his departure. His hand planted the inquisition in the Netherlands. Before his day it is idle to say that the diabolical institution ever had a place there. The isolated cases in which inquisitors had exercised functions proved the absence and not the presence of the system. Charles introduced and organised a papal inquisition, side by side with those terrible "placards" of his invention, which constituted a masked inquisition even more cruel than that of Spain. The execution of the system was never permitted to languish. The number of Netherlanders who were burned, strangled, beheaded, or buried alive, in obedience to his edicts, and for the offences of reading the Scriptures, of looking askance at a graven image, or of ridiculing the actual presence of the body and blood of Christ in a wafer, has been placed as high as one hundred thousand by distinguished authorities, and has rarely been put at a lower mark than fifty thousand.<sup>2</sup> The Venetian envoy Navigero estimated the victims in the provinces of Holland and Friesland alone at thirty thousand, and this in 1546, ten years before the abdication, and five before the promulgation of the hideous edict of 1550!

The edicts and the inquisition were the gift of Charles to the Netherlands, in return for their wasted treasure and their constant obedience. For this, his name deserves to be handed down to eternal infamy, not only throughout the Netherlands, but in every land where a single heart beats for political or religious freedom. To eradicate these institutions after they had been watered

[<sup>1</sup> The character of Charles has perhaps been more eloquently and elegantly maligned by Robertson<sup>m</sup> and Motley<sup>k</sup> than he deserved. A recent life by Edward Armstrong<sup>n</sup> offers a counterweight. Against the charges of despotic ambition Armstrong emphasises the fact that he convoked the diets in Germany more frequently than even the Protestant princes desired, and that during his reign the states-general of the Netherlands met over fifty times.]

[<sup>2</sup> "*Nam post carnificata hominum non minus centum millia, ex quo tentatum an posset incendium hoc sanguine restingui, tanta multitudo per Belgicam insurrexerat, ut publica interdum supplicia quoties insignior reus, aut atrociores cruciatus seditione impedirentur.*"—HUGO GROTIUS [DE GROOT].<sup>o</sup> But Blok<sup>j</sup> scoffs at so high an estimate. See the next chapter.]



and watched by the care of his successor, was the work of an eighty years' war, in the course of which millions of lives were sacrificed.

Yet there is no doubt that the emperor was at times almost popular in the Netherlands, and that he was never as odious as his successor. There were some deep reasons for this, and some superficial ones; among others, a singularly fortunate manner. He spoke German, Spanish, Italian, French, and Flemish, and could assume the characteristics of each country as easily as he could use its language. He could be stately with Spaniards, familiar with Flemings, witty with Italians. He could strike down a bull in the ring like a matador at Madrid, or win the prize in the tourney like a knight of old; he could ride at the ring with the Flemish nobles, hit the popinjay with his crossbow among Antwerp artisans, or drink beer and exchange rude jests with the boors of Brabant. For virtues such as these, his grave crimes against God and man, against religion and chartered and solemnly-sworn rights, have been palliated as if oppression became more tolerable because the oppressor was an accomplished linguist and a good marksman.<sup>k</sup>

#### PROSPEROUS CONDITION OF THE COUNTRY

The whole of the provinces of the Netherlands being now for the first time united under one sovereign, such a junctior marks the limits of a second epoch in their history. It would be a presumptuous and vain attempt to trace, in a compass so confined as ours, the various changes in manners and customs which arose in these countries during a period of one thousand years. The extended and profound remarks of many celebrated writers on the state of Europe from the decline of the Roman power to the epoch at which we are now arrived must be referred to, to judge of the gradual progress of civilisation through the gloom of the dark ages, till the dawn of enlightenment which led to the grand system of European politics commenced during the reign of Charles V.

The amazing increase of commerce was, above all other considerations, the cause of the growth of liberty in the Netherlands. The Reformation opened the minds of men to that intellectual freedom without which political enfranchisement is a worthless privilege. The invention of printing opened a thousand channels to the flow of erudition and talent, and sent them out from the reservoirs of individual possession to fertilise the whole domain of human nature. Manufactures attained a state of high perfection, and went on progressively with the growth of wealth and luxury. The opulence of the towns of Brabant and Flanders was without any previous example in the state of Europe. A merchant of Bruges took upon himself alone the security for the ransom of John the Fearless, taken at the battle of Nicopolis, amounting to two hundred thousand ducats. A provost of Valenciennes repaired to Paris at one of the great fairs periodically held there, and purchased on his own account every article that was for sale. The meetings of the different towns for the sports of archery were signalised by the most splendid display of dress and decoration. The archers were habited in silk, damask, and the finest linen, and carried chains of gold of great weight and value. Luxury was at its height among women. The queen of Philip the Handsome of France, on a visit to Bruges, exclaimed, with astonishment not unmixed with envy, "I thought myself the only queen here; but I see six hundred others who appear more so than I."

The dresses of both men and women at this chivalric epoch were of almost incredible expense. Velvet, satin, gold, and precious stones seemed the

ordinary materials for the dress of either sex; while the very housings of the horses sparkled with brilliants and cost immense sums. This absurd extravagance was carried so far that Charles V found himself forced at length to proclaim sumptuary laws for its repression.

Such excessive luxury naturally led to great corruption of manners and the commission of terrible crimes. During the reign of Philip de Male, there were committed in the city of Ghent and its outskirts, in less than a year, above fourteen hundred murders in gambling-houses and other resorts of debauchery. As early as the tenth century, the petty sovereigns established on the ruins of the empire of Charlemagne began the independent coining of money; and the various provinces were during the rest of this epoch inundated with a most embarrassing variety of gold, silver, and copper.

Even in ages of comparative darkness, literature made feeble efforts to burst through the entangled weeds of superstition, ignorance, and war. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries history was greatly cultivated; and Froissart, Monstretet, Olivier de la Marche, and Philip de Comines gave to their chronicles and memoirs a charm of style since their days almost unrivalled. Poetry began to be followed with success in the Netherlands, in the Dutch, Flemish, and French languages; and even before the institution of the Floral Games in France, Belgium possessed its chambers of rhetoric (*rederykkamers*), which laboured to keep alive the sacred flame of poetry with more zeal than success. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries these societies were established in almost every burgh of Flanders and Brabant, the principal towns possessing several at once.

The arts in their several branches made considerable progress in the Netherlands during this epoch. Architecture was greatly cultivated in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, most of the cathedrals and town houses being constructed in that age. Their vastness, solidity, and beauty of design and execution, make them still speaking monuments of the stern magnificence and finished taste of the times. The patronage of Philip the Good, Charles the Bold, and Margaret of Austria brought music into fashion, and led to its cultivation in a remarkable degree. The first musicians of France were drawn from Flanders; and other professors from that country acquired great celebrity in Italy for their scientific improvements in their art.

Painting, which had languished before the fifteenth century, sprang at once into a new existence from the invention of Jan Van Eyck. His accidental discovery of the art of painting in oil quickly spread over Europe. Painting on glass, polishing diamonds, the carillon, lace, and tapestry were among the inventions which owed their birth to the Netherlands in these ages, when the faculties of mankind sought so many new channels for mechanical development.

The discovery of a new world by Columbus and other eminent navigators gave a fresh and powerful impulse to European talent, by affording an immense reservoir for its reward. The town of Antwerp was, during the reign of Charles V, the outlet for the industry of Europe, and the receptacle for the productions of all the nations of the earth. Its port was so often crowded with vessels that each successive fleet was obliged to wait long in the Schelde before it could obtain admission for the discharge of its cargoes. The University of Louvain, that great nursery of science, was founded in 1425, and served greatly to the spread of knowledge, although it degenerated into the hotbed of those fierce disputes which stamped on theology the degradation of bigotry, and drew down odium on a study that, if purely practised, ought only to inspire veneration.

The Netherlands were never in a more flourishing state than at the accession of Philip II. The external relations of the country presented an aspect of prosperity and peace. England was closely allied to it by Queen Mary's marriage with Philip; France, fatigued with war, had just concluded with it a five years' truce; Germany, paralysed by religious dissensions, exhausted itself in domestic quarrels; the other states were too distant or too weak to inspire any uneasiness; and nothing appeared wanting for the public weal. Nevertheless there was something dangerous and alarming in the situation of the Low Countries; but the danger consisted wholly in the connection between the monarch and the people, and the alarm was not sounded till the mischief was beyond remedy.<sup>d</sup>

