



CHAPTER IX

LEICESTER IN THE LOW COUNTRIES

[1584-1598 A.D.]

WILLIAM THE SILENT, prince of Orange, had been murdered on the 10th of July, 1584. It is difficult to imagine a more universal disaster than the one thus brought about by the hand of a single obscure fanatic. For nearly twenty years the character of the prince had been expanding steadily as the difficulties of his situation increased. Habit, necessity, and the natural gifts of the man had combined to invest him at last with an authority which seemed more than human. There was such general confidence in his sagacity, courage, and purity that the nation had come to think with his brain and to act with his hand. It was natural that, for an instant, there should be a feeling as of absolute and helpless paralysis.

The ban of the pope and the offered gold of the king had accomplished a victory greater than any yet achieved by the armies of Spain, brilliant as had been their triumphs on the blood-stained soil of the Netherlands. Had that "exceeding proud, neat, and spruce" doctor of laws, William P^{ai}ly, who had been busying himself at about the same time with his memorable project against the queen of England, proved as successful as Balthasar Gérard, the fate of Christendom would have been still darker.

Yet such was the condition of Europe at that day. A small, dull, elderly, imperfectly educated, patient, plodding invalid, with white hair and protruding under-jaw and dreary visage, was sitting day after day, seldom speaking, never smiling, seven or eight hours out of every twenty-four, at a writing table covered with heaps of interminable despatches, in a cabinet far away beyond the seas and mountains, in the very heart of Spain. A clerk or two, noiselessly opening and shutting the door, from time to time, fetching fresh bundles of letters and taking away others — all written and composed by secretaries or high functionaries — and all to be scrawled over in the margin by the diligent old man in a big schoolboy's hand and style —

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if ever schoolboy, even in the sixteenth century, could write so illegibly or express himself so awkwardly; couriers in the courtyard arriving from or departing for the uttermost parts of earth — Asia, Africa, America, Europe — to fetch and carry these interminable epistles which contained the irresponsible commands of this one individual, and were freighted with the doom and destiny of countless millions of the world's inhabitants — such was the system of government against which the Netherlands had protested and revolted. It was a system under which their fields had been made desolate, their cities burned and pillaged, their men hanged, burned, drowned, or hacked to pieces; their women subjected to every outrage: and to put an end to which they had been devoting their treasure and their blood for nearly the length of one generation. It was a system, too, which, among other results, had just brought about the death of the foremost statesman of Europe, and had nearly effected simultaneously the murder of the most eminent sovereign in the world. The industrious Philip, safe and tranquil in the depths of the Escorial, saying his prayers three times a day with exemplary regularity, had just sent three bullets through the body of William the Silent at his dining-room door in Delft. "Had it only been done two years earlier," observed the patient old man, "much trouble might have been spared me; but it is better late than never."

Philip stood enfeoffed, by divine decree, of all America, the East Indies, the whole Spanish peninsula, the better portion of Italy, the seventeen Netherlands, and many other possessions far and near; and he contemplated annexing to this extensive property the kingdoms of France, of England, and Ireland. The holy league, maintained by the sword of Guise, the pope's ban, Spanish ducats, Italian condottieri, and German mercenaries, was to exterminate heresy and establish the Spanish dominion in France. The same machinery, aided by the pistol or poniard of the assassin, was to substitute for English protestantism and England's queen the Roman Catholic religion and a foreign sovereign. "The holy league," said Duplessis-Mornay,^b one of the noblest characters of the age, "has destined us all to the same sacrifice. The ambition of the Spaniard, which has overleaped so many lands and seas, thinks nothing inaccessible."

The Netherlands revolt had therefore assumed world-wide proportions. Had it been merely the rebellion of provinces against a sovereign, the importance of the struggle would have been more local and temporary. But the period was one in which the geographical landmarks of countries were almost removed. The dividing-line ran through every state, city, and almost every family.

A vast responsibility rested upon the head of a monarch placed, as Philip II found himself, at this great dividing point in modern history. To judge him, or any man in such a position, simply from his own point of view, is weak and illogical. History judges the man according to its point of view. It condemns or applauds the point of view itself. The point of view of a malefactor is not to excuse robbery and murder. Nor is the spirit of the age to be pleaded in defence of the evil-doer at a time when mortals were divided into almost equal troops. The age of Philip II was also the age of William of Orange and his four brethren, of Sainte-Aldegonde, of Olden-Barneveld, of Duplessis-Mornay, La Noue, Coligny, of Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin, Walsingham, Sidney, Raleigh, Queen Elizabeth, of Michel Montaigne, and William Shakespeare. It was not an age of blindness, but of glorious light.

The king perhaps firmly believed that the heretics of the Netherlands, of France, or of England could escape eternal perdition only by being extir-

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pated from the earth by fire and sword, and therefore, perhaps, felt it his duty to devote his life to their extermination. But he believed still more firmly that his own political authority, throughout his dominions, and his road to almost universal empire lay over the bodies of those heretics. Three centuries have passed since this memorable epoch; and the world knows the fate of the states which accepted the dogma which it was Philip's life-work to enforce, and of those who protested against the system. The Spanish and Italian peninsulas have had a different history from that which records the career of France, Prussia, the Dutch Commonwealth, the British Empire, the Transatlantic Republic.

Yet the contest between those seven meagre provinces upon the sand-banks of the North Sea and the great Spanish Empire seemed at the moment with which we are now occupied a sufficiently desperate one.

THE SITUATION AFTER THE DEATH OF PRINCE WILLIAM

The limit of the Spanish or "obedient" provinces, on the one hand, and of the United Provinces on the other, cannot be briefly and distinctly stated. The memorable treason — or, as it was called, the "Reconciliation" of the Walloon Provinces in the year 1583-84 — had placed the provinces of Hainault, Artois, Douai, with the flourishing cities Arras, Valenciennes, Lille, Tournay, and others — all Celtic Flanders, in short — in the grasp of Spain. Cambrai was still held by the French governor, Seigneur de Balagny, who had taken advantage of the duke of Anjou's treachery to the states to establish himself in an unrecognised but practical petty sovereignty, in defiance both of France and Spain; while East Flanders and South Brabant still remained a disputed territory, and the immediate field of contest. With these limitations, it may be assumed, for general purposes, that the territory of the united states was that of the modern kingdom of the Netherlands, while the obedient provinces occupied what is now the territory of Belgium. Such, then, were the combatants in the great eighty-years' war for civil and religious liberty; sixteen of which had now passed away.

What now was the political position of the United Provinces at this juncture? The sovereignty which had been held by the states, ready to be conferred respectively upon Anjou and Orange, remained in the hands of the states. There was no opposition to this theory. No more enlarged view of the social compact had yet been taken. The people, as such, claimed no sovereignty. Had any champion claimed it for them they would hardly have understood him. The nation dealt with facts. After abjuring Philip in 1581 — an act which had been accomplished by the states — the same states in general assembly had exercised sovereign power, and had twice disposed of that sovereign power by electing a hereditary ruler. Their right and their power to do this had been disputed by none, save by the deposed monarch in Spain. Having the sovereignty to dispose of, it seemed logical that the states might keep it, if so inclined. They did keep it, but only in trust.

Even on the very day of the murder, the states of Holland, then sitting at Delft, passed a resolution "to maintain the good cause, with God's help, to the uttermost, without sparing gold or blood." At the same time, the sixteen members — or no greater number happened to be present at the session — addressed letters to their absent colleagues, urging an immediate convocation of the states. Among these sixteen were Van Zuylen, Van Nyvelt,

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the seigneur de Warmont, the advocate of Holland, Paul Buys, Joost de Menin, and John van Olden-Barneveld.

The next movement, after the last solemn obsequies had been rendered to the prince, was to provide for the immediate wants of his family. For the man who had gone into the revolt with almost royal revenues left his estate so embarrassed that his carpets, tapestries, household linen — nay, even his silver spoons, and the very clothes of his wardrobe — were disposed of at auction for the benefit of his creditors. The eldest son, Philip William, had been a captive in Spain for seventeen years. He had already become thoroughly hispaniolised. All of good that he had retained was a reverence for his father's name — a sentiment which he had manifested to an extravagant extent on a memorable occasion in Madrid, by throwing out of the window and killing on the spot a Spanish officer who had dared to mention the great prince with insult.

The next son was Maurice, then seventeen years of age, a handsome youth, with dark blue eyes, well-chiselled features, and full red lips, who had already manifested a courage and concentration of character beyond his years. The son of William the Silent, the grandson of Maurice of Saxony, whom he resembled in visage and character he was summoned by every drop of blood in his veins to do life-long battle with the spirit of Spanish absolutism, and he was already girding himself for his life's work. He assumed at once for his device a fallen oak, with a young sapling springing from its root. His motto, "*Tandem fit surculus arbor*" (the twig shall yet become a tree), was to be nobly justified by his career.

The remaining son, Frederick Henry, then six months old, was also destined to high fortunes, and to win an enduring name in his country's history. For the present he remained with his mother, the noble Louise de Coligny, who had thus seen, at long intervals, her father and two husbands fall victims to the Spanish policy; for it is as certain that Philip knew beforehand, and testified his approbation of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, as that he was the murderer of Orange.

The states of Holland implored the widowed princess to remain in their territory, settling a liberal allowance upon herself and her child, and she fixed her residence at Leyden.

Very soon afterwards the states-general established a state council, as a provisional executive board, for the term of three months, for the provinces of Holland, Zealand, Utrecht, Friesland, and such parts of Flanders and Brabant as still remained in the union. At the head of this body was placed young Maurice, who accepted the responsible position, after three days' deliberation. The salary of Maurice was fixed at 30,000 florins a year. The council consisted of three members from Brabant, two from Flanders, four from Holland, three from Zealand, two from Utrecht, one from Mechlin, and three from Friesland — eighteen in all. Diplomatic relations, questions of peace and war, the treaty-making power were not entrusted to the council, without the knowledge and consent of the states-general, which body was to be convoked twice a year by the state council.

THE ACTIVITY OF PARMA

Thus the provinces in the hour of danger and darkness were true to themselves, and were far from giving way to a despondency which under the circumstances would not have been unnatural. For the waves of bitterness were rolling far and wide around them. A medal, struck in Holland at this

period, represented a dismayed hulk reeling through the tempest. The motto, "*Incertum quo fata ferent?*" (who knows whither fate is sweeping her?) expressed most vividly the shipwrecked condition of the country.

Alessandro of Parma, the most accomplished general and one of the most adroit statesmen of the age, was swift to take advantage of the calamity which had now befallen the rebellious provinces. Had he been better provided with men and money, the cause of the states might have seemed hopeless. He addressed many letters to the states-general, to the magistracies of various cities, and to individuals, affecting to consider that with the death of Orange had died all authority, as well as all motive for continuing the contest with Spain.

In Holland and Zealand the prince's blandishments were of no avail. He was, moreover, not strong in the field, although he was far superior to the states at this contingency. He had, besides his garrisons, something above eighteen thousand men. The provinces had hardly three thousand foot and two thousand five hundred horse, and these were mostly lying in the neighbourhood of Zutphen. Alessandro was threatening at the same time Ghent, Dendermonde, Mechlin, Brussels, and Antwerp. These five powerful cities lie in a narrow circle, at distances varying from six miles to thirty, and are, as it were, strung together upon the Schelde, by which river, or its tributary, the Senne, they are all threaded. It would have been impossible for Parma, with one hundred thousand men at his back, to undertake a regular and simultaneous siege of these important places. His purpose was to isolate them from each other and from the rest of the country, by obtaining the control of the great river, and so to reduce them by famine. The scheme was a masterly one, but even the consummate ability of Farnese would have proved inadequate to the undertaking, had not the preliminary assassination of Orange made the task comparatively easy.

Upon the 17th of August Dendermonde surrendered, and no lives were taken save those of two preachers, one of whom was hanged, while the other was drowned. Upon the 7th of September Vilvorde capitulated, by which event the water-communication between Brussels and Antwerp was cut off.

The noble city of Ghent — then as large as Paris, thoroughly surrounded with moats, and fortified — was ignominiously surrendered September 17th. The fall of Brussels was deferred till March, and that of Mechlin to the 19th July, 1585; but the surrender of Ghent foreshadowed the fate of Flanders and Brabant. Ostend and Sluys, however, were still in the hands of the patriots, and with them the control of the whole Flemish coast. The command of the sea was destined to remain for centuries with the new republic.

The prince of Parma, thus encouraged by the great success of his intrigues, was determined to achieve still greater triumphs with his arms, and steadily proceeded with his large design of closing the Schelde and bringing about the fall of Antwerp. That siege was one of the most brilliant military operations of the age and one of the most memorable in its results.^c

But these domestic victories of the prince of Parma were barren in any of those results which humanity would love to see in the train of conquest. The reconciled provinces presented the most deplorable spectacle. The chief towns were almost depopulated. The inhabitants had in a great measure fallen victims to war, pestilence, and famine. Little inducement existed to replace by marriage the ravages caused by death, for few men wished to propagate a race which divine wrath seemed to have marked for persecution. The thousands of villages which had covered the face of the country were

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absolutely abandoned to the wolves, which had so rapidly increased that they attacked not merely cattle and children, but grown-up persons. The dogs, driven abroad by hunger, had become as ferocious as other beasts of prey, and joined in large packs to hunt down brutes and men. Neither fields, nor woods, nor roads were now to be distinguished by any visible limits. All was an entangled mass of trees, weeds, and grass. The prices of the necessaries of life were so high that people of rank, after selling everything to buy bread, were obliged to have recourse to open beggary in the streets of the great towns.^d

ANTWERP BESIEGED (1584)

The fall of Ghent had enabled Parma to resume his attack on Antwerp. The Antwerpers having inundated the whole country from Hulst to Beveren, he erected strong forts along the Kowenstyn dike, to prevent the passage of vessels to Lillo and Antwerp from Zeeland.

Parma, finding that the Zeeland vessels continued, notwithstanding his fortifications along the dike, to pass up the Schelde to Antwerp, resolved upon the stupendous and apparently impracticable undertaking of throwing a bridge across the broad, deep, and rapid part of that river between Antwerp and Calloo. Its execution was entrusted to Sebastian Baroccio, an Italian engineer of eminent ability, who built a fort at each end of the intended work, which he named the St. Philip and the St. Mary. By means of this "stoccade," as it was called, the river was narrowed, 1,250 feet being left between the two blockhouses at the ends. This space Baroccio filled with boats, placed at a distance of about twenty feet from each other, and fastened by two anchors against the flood and ebb tide; these boats, linked together by four strong cables, were connected with each other by means of masts, over which were laid planks; thirty men were stationed in each boat, with a cannon fore and aft. Besides this defence, Parma stationed all the men-of-war he could collect both above and below the bridge.

The besieged had relied on the impossibility of his achieving an enterprise of such difficulty, carried on during the winter months, when, if it escaped being broken in pieces by the masses of floating ice in the river, it could easily be destroyed by the Holland and Zeeland vessels, which in the long dark nights might approach it unperceived. Both these expectations turned out delusive. The winter proved remarkably mild, so that there was not sufficient ice in the river to do the slightest damage to the works; and the assistance from Holland and Zeeland, which the Antwerpers besought with reiterated entreaties, did not arrive.

Prince Maurice, however, and the council of Zeeland, issued repeated orders to William of Treslong, admiral of Zeeland, to sail into the Schelde, with which he refused compliance, alleging that his fleet was not sufficiently strong to risk the attempt. Treslong, who was strongly suspected of a secret understanding with the enemy, was afterwards deprived of his office and thrown into prison, Justin of Nassau, natural son of the prince of Orange, being created admiral in his stead; but the irrevocable opportunity had passed away, and Parma was left unmolested during the long period of seven months to complete a work of which the ultimate fall of Antwerp was the inevitable consequence.

The embarrassed condition of their affairs determined the Netherlanders, notwithstanding the severe lesson afforded them by past experience, to put themselves once more under the protection of a foreign prince. The late duke of Brabant had declared by will his brother, Henry III of France, heir

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councils of the towns. At length the entreaties of Brabant, Flanders, and Mechlin prevailed with the states of Holland to give a reluctant consent.

It did not appear that the king would long hesitate to accept conditions of so highly flattering a nature, in the framing of which, indeed, we recognise nothing of the usual spirit of freedom and jealous watchfulness of the Dutch people. But the feeble and irresolute king, instead of grasping at once the powerful weapon which the possession of the Netherlands would have placed in his hands both against Spain and the disaffected of his own kingdom, refused for the present the offer of the deputies, alleging that the disturbances excited in his kingdom by the king of Spain prevented his affording the Netherlanders any assistance.

The city of Brussels had long been grievously straitened for want of provisions, in consequence of the obstruction of the Schelde by the bridge of boats. Brussels surrendered, therefore, on conditions sufficiently favourable, except that the privileges of the town were to be retrenched according to the pleasure of the king. Nearly at the same time the Catholics in the city of Nimeguen found themselves in sufficient number and strength to drive out the garrison of the states and place the town under the government of the prince of Parma. The like happened with respect to Doesborgh. Ostend was also attempted by La Motte, governor of Gravelines, who, with a detachment of soldiers, surprised and took possession of the part called the Old Town, which was but weakly fortified. But Ostend was not destined to sink thus ingloriously under the power of the enemy; an honourable place was yet reserved for her on the page of history as a martyr to the cause of liberty. The citizens, joining their arms with those of the garrison, attacked La Motte before the remainder of his troops arrived, or he had time to strengthen himself in his position, and drove him back with a loss of two hundred men and forty officers.^e

The details of the military or political operations by which the reduction of most of these places was effected possess but little interest. The siege of Antwerp, however, was one of the most striking events of the age. All the science then at command was applied both by the prince and by his burgher antagonists to the advancement of their ends — hydrostatics, hydraulics, engineering, navigation, gunnery, pyrotechnics, mining, geometry, were summoned as broadly, vigorously, and intelligently to the destruction or preservation of a trembling city as they have ever been, in more commercial days, to advance a financial or manufacturing purpose. Land converted into water and water into land, castles built upon the breast of rapid streams, rivers turned from their beds and taught new courses, the distant ocean driven across ancient bulwarks, mines dug below the sea, and canals made to percolate obscene morasses — which the red hand of war, by the very act, converted into blooming gardens — a mighty stream bridged and mastered in the very teeth of winter, floating icebergs, ocean-tides, and an alert and desperate foe, ever ready with fleets and armies and batteries — such were the materials of which the great spectacle was composed: a spectacle which enchained the attention of Europe for seven months, and on the result of which, it was thought, depended the fate of all the Netherlands and, perhaps, of all Christendom.^c

Seeking too late to repair the fatal error committed in allowing Parma to complete his bridge, the count of Hohenlohe and Justin of Nassau, admiral of Zealand, with a considerable force of Holland and Zealand vessels, captured the fort of Liefhenshoek. Numerous plans were devised for the purpose of breaking down the bridge, and among the rest Giambelli, an engineer of

Mantua (the same who was in the service of Queen Elizabeth at the defeat of the armada), undertook to blow it up by means of two fire-ships, laden each with six or seven thousand pounds of powder. One of these, taking fire before it had approached sufficiently near the works, proved useless; but the other, named the *Hope*, of about eighty tons' burden, exploded with fatal and terrific effect.

The Spanish soldiers, thinking that the intention was to set fire to the bridge, crowded upon it for the purpose of extinguishing the flames, when the vessel blew up, and above eight hundred were mingled in one horrible and promiscuous slaughter. Parma himself, who had quitted the bridge only a few moments before, was struck down stunned, but quickly recovered his senses and with them his accustomed intrepidity. The shock was so violent that it was felt at the distance of nine miles; the waters of the Schelde, driven from their bed, inundated the surrounding country, and entirely filled the fort of St. Mary, at the Flanders end of the bridge.

But it seemed destined that all the efforts made for the delivery of Antwerp should be untimely or incomplete. The crew of the boat which Hohenlohe sent to reconnoitre were afraid to approach sufficiently near to ascertain the amount of damage done; and, in consequence, both the Antwerpers and a fleet of Holland and Zealand vessels, stationed at Lillo, were left in ignorance of the rupture of the bridge till Parma had time to repair it, which he effected with his customary celerity in two or three days.

Among other measures of defence adopted by the citizens of Antwerp, they had constructed an enormous vessel, or rather floating castle, being regularly fortified, at an expense of 1,000,000 florins, with which they hoped to break through the bridge; and so sanguine were they of the effect it was to produce, that, with a presumption but ill justified by the event, they named it the *End of the War (Fin de la Guerre)*. But its vast bulk rendered it wholly unmanageable, and having stranded in the mud near Oordam, all efforts to set it afloat again proved unavailing. Meanwhile, the scarcity of corn within the walls of Antwerp became extreme, although the government successfully endeavoured to conceal it for some time from the people, by keeping the price of bread down to its usual standard. As, however, the discovery of the fact could not much longer be delayed, and no hope of assistance appeared either by sea or land, since Parma had possessed himself of all the surrounding forts, they deemed it advisable to propose terms of surrender.

The negotiations were opened by Saint-Aldegonde, one of the strongest advocates for a pacification. Reasons of policy combined with the natural generosity of Parma's disposition to induce him to grant the most favourable terms. The affair, therefore, was not long pending; the inhabitants received a general pardon and oblivion of offences; those of the reformed religion were allowed to remain two years in the city, and within that time to dispose of their property as they pleased; a ransom of 400,000 guilders was to be paid; and the ill-omened citadel was to be restored, but with a promise that it should be destroyed as soon as Holland and Zealand returned to the obedience of the king. Notwithstanding the permission granted them to remain, however, the Reformers did not wait for the triumphal entry of Parma into Antwerp. Three days after the surrender they held their last melancholy service, and within a short time the whole body, among whom the most intelligent, wealthy, and industrious burghers were numbered, retired into exile, the greater portion to Holland and Zealand.

The consequence of the surrender of Antwerp was to deprive the states of the services of one of the earliest, the most active, and the most devoted

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defenders of Netherland liberty. It is utterly impossible to believe that Sainte-Aldegonde, a man of the very highest virtues and attainments, could for a moment contemplate betraying that cause for which he had made such vast sacrifices.¹ He presented an able defence of his conduct to the states, and his cause was strenuously pleaded by the renowned De la Noue; but, severe in punishing the slightest appearance of treachery, the states excluded him from any share in public affairs until several years after, when he was employed by Prince Maurice in an embassy to France.

The loss of Sainte-Aldegonde was in some, though a small degree repaired by the acquisition of Martin Schenk, an able and experienced captain, who, having formerly deserted to the royalist side, now, finding that he was treated by Parma with less consideration than he imagined due to him, returned to his allegiance under the states, and delivered his fortress of Blyenbeek into the hands of the count of Mörs. The

states now despatched a solemn embassy to England, for the purpose of soliciting the queen to become sovereign of the United Provinces.^e



ALESSANDRO FARNESE, PRINCE OF PARMA
(1546-1592)

MOTLEY'S PORTRAIT OF OLDEN-BARNEVELD

There was at this moment one Netherlander, the chief of the present mission to England, already the foremost statesman of his country, whose name will not soon be effaced from the record of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. That man was Jan van Olden-Barneveld.² He was now in his thirty-eighth year, having been born at Amersfoort on the 14th of September, 1547. He bore an imposing name, for the Olden-Barnevelds of Gelderland were a race of unquestionable and antique nobility. His enemies, however, questioned his right to the descent which he claimed.

He had been a profound and indefatigable student from his earliest youth.

[¹ It is certain, whatever his motives, that his attitude had completely changed. For it was not Antwerp alone that he had reconciled, or was endeavouring to reconcile, with the king of Spain, but Holland and Zealand as well, and all the other independent provinces. The ancient champion of the patriot army, the earliest signer of the Compromise, the bosom friend of William the Silent, the author of the "Wilhelmus" national song, now avowed his conviction, in a published defence of his conduct against the calumnious attacks upon it, that it was "impossible, with a clear conscience, for subjects, under any circumstances, to take up arms against Philip, their king." Certainly if he had always entertained that opinion he must have suffered many pangs of remorse during his twenty years of active and illustrious rebellion. He now made himself secretly active in promoting the schemes of Parma and in counteracting the negotiation with England. He flattered himself, with an infatuation which it is difficult to comprehend, that it would be possible to obtain religious liberty for the revolting provinces, although he had consented to its sacrifice in Antwerp. — MOTLEY.^c]

[² In his biography of this man, Motley^d adopts Barneveld, the English and French form of the name, while confessing that "Oldenbarneveldt" was more correct.]

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He had read law at Leyden, in France, at Heidelberg. Here, in the headquarters of German Calvinism, his youthful mind had long pondered the dread themes of foreknowledge, judgment absolute, free will, and predestination. Perplexed in the extreme, the youthful Jan bethought himself of an inscription over the gateway of his famous but questionable great-grandfather's house at Amersfoort — "*Nil scire tutissima fides*" [To know nothing is the safest creed]. He resolved thenceforth to adopt a system of ignorance upon matters beyond the flaming walls of the world; to do the work before him manfully and faithfully while he walked the earth, and to trust that a benevolent Creator would devote neither him nor any other man to eternal hell-fire. For this most offensive doctrine he was howled at by the strictly pious, while he earned still deeper opprobrium by daring to advocate religious toleration. In face of the endless horrors inflicted by the Spanish Inquisition upon his native land, he had the hardihood — although a determined Protestant himself — to claim for Roman Catholics the right to exercise their religion in the free states on equal terms with those of the reformed faith. At a later period the most zealous Calvinists called him pope John.

After completing his very thorough legal studies, he had practised as an advocate in Holland and Zealand. An early defender of civil and religious freedom, he had been brought into contact with William the Silent, who recognised his ability. He had borne a share on his shoulder as a volunteer in the memorable attempt to relieve Haarlem, and was one of the few survivors of that bloody night. He had stood outside the walls of Leyden in company of the prince of Orange when that magnificent destruction of the dikes had taken place by which the city had been saved from the fate impending over it. At a still more recent period he landed from the gunboats upon the Kowenstyn, on the fatal 26th of May. These military adventures were, however, but brief and accidental episodes in his career, which was that of a statesman and diplomatist. As pensionary of Rotterdam, he was constantly a member of the general assembly and had already begun to guide the policy of the new commonwealth.¹ His experience was considerable, and he was now in the high noon of his vigour and his usefulness.

THE EMBASSY TO ELIZABETH (1585)

The commissioners arrived at Greenwich Stairs, and were at once ushered into the palace. Certainly, if the provinces needed a king, they might have wandered the whole earth over, and had it been possible, searched through the whole range of history, before finding a monarch with a more kingly spirit than the great queen to whom they had at last had recourse. But the queen, besides other objections to the course proposed by the provinces, thought that she could do a better thing in the way of mortgages. In this, perhaps, there was something of the penny-wise policy which sprang from one great defect in her character. At any rate much mischief was done by the mercantile spirit which dictated the hard chaffering on both sides the Channel at this important juncture; for, during this tedious flint-paring, Antwerp, which might have been saved, was falling into the hands of Philip. It should never be forgotten, however, that the queen had no standing army, and but a small revenue. The men to be sent from England to the Netherland wars were first to be levied wherever it was possible to find them.^c

[¹ Elsewhere Motley *g* says: "There can be no doubt that if William the Silent was the founder of the independence of the United Provinces, Barneveld was the founder of the commonwealth itself. . . . And the states-general were virtually Jan van Barneveld."]]

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Though the queen declined accepting the sovereignty for the present, she consented to appoint a governor-general of the United Provinces in her name; she promised also to send at her own cost an army of five thousand foot and one thousand horse into the Netherlands. As a security for the repayment of her expenses, the states were to admit English garrisons into Flushing, Rammekens, and Briel, and into two fortresses in the province of Holland, until the debt were liquidated, the governors of the garrisons being bound not to interfere with the political or civil government of these towns, which was to be administered according to their own laws, by the customary magistrates and officers, nor to levy any contribution on the inhabitants; two Englishmen were to have a sitting in the council of state, to which also the governors of the above-mentioned garrisons were to be admitted, to confer on any subject relating to the queen's interests, but without the liberty of voting. A council of war, to which the queen might appoint such persons as the governor recommended, was, in conjunction with the council of state, to remedy the abuses in the levy of the taxes, to abrogate all useless offices, and to apply the public funds as they thought expedient. Thus, it will be seen that Elizabeth secured to herself a pretty large share of influence in the provinces, and placed herself in such a position with regard to them that she might easily assume the supreme power whenever she found it convenient.

Within little more than a month after the conclusion of the treaty, Sir John Norris arrived with the English forces in Utrecht. The command of the garrisons at Flushing and Rammekens was given to Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Thomas Cecil being made governor of Briel and the fortresses in Holland. The office of governor-general was conferred on Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, a man every way unfitted for the discharge of so delicate and important a trust. Vainglorious, ambitious, inconstant, and insincere, the mediocrity of his talents was thrown into still deeper shade by the brilliant luminaries which at this period surrounded the throne of Elizabeth; and while his reputation as a public character was contemptible, in private life it was stained by the darkest suspicions.

The knowledge probably which Barneveld had obtained of his character during his mission to England induced him to urge the states of Holland, on his return, to confirm the authority of Prince Maurice as stadholder of that province and Zealand, which they did, November 1st, 1585, before the coming of Leicester; the prince being bound, however, by his instructions to respect the authority of the governor-general.^e

THE ENGLISH UNDER LEICESTER IN HOLLAND

The earl had raised a choice body of lancers to accompany him to the Netherlands, but the expense of the levy had come mainly upon his own purse. The queen had advanced five thousand pounds, which was much less than the requisite amount. She violently accused him of cheating her, reclaimed money which he had wrung from her on good security, and when he repaid the sum objected to give him a discharge. As for receiving anything by way of salary, that was quite out of the question. At that moment he would have been only too happy to be reimbursed for what he was already out of pocket. Whether Elizabeth loved Leicester as a brother or better than a brother may be a historical question, but it is no question at all that she loved money better than she did Leicester. Unhappy the man, whether foe or favourite, who had pecuniary transactions with her highness.

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Davison had been meantime doing his best to prepare the way in the Netherlands for the reception of the English administration. What man could do, without money and without authority, he had done. As might naturally be expected, the lamentable condition of the English soldiers, unpaid and starving — according to the report of the queen's envoy himself — exercised anything but a salutary influence upon the minds of the Netherlanders and perpetually fed the hopes of the Spanish partisans that a composition with Philip and Parma would yet take place. On the other hand, the states had been far more liberal in raising funds than the queen had shown herself to be, and were somewhat indignant at being perpetually taunted with parsimony by her agents.

At last, however, the die had been cast. The queen, although rejecting the proposed sovereignty of the Netherlands, had espoused their cause, by solemn treaty of alliance, and thereby had thrown down the gauntlet to Spain. She deemed it necessary, therefore, out of respect for the opinions of mankind, to issue a manifesto of her motives to the world. The document was published simultaneously in Dutch, French, English, and Italian.

Subsequently to the publication of the queen's memorial, and before the departure of the earl of Leicester, Sir Philip Sidney, having received his appointment, together with the rank of general of cavalry, arrived in the isle of Walcheren, as governor of Flushing, at the head of a portion of the English contingent. It is impossible not to contemplate with affection so radiant a figure, shining through the cold mists of that Zealand winter, and that distant and disastrous epoch. There is hardly a character in history upon which the imagination can dwell with more unalloyed delight. Not in romantic fiction was there ever created a more attractive incarnation of martial valour, poetic genius, and purity of heart.

At last the earl of Leicester came, embarking at Harwich, with a fleet of fifty ships, and attended by "the flower and chief gallants of England." Now began a triumphal progress through the land, with a series of mighty banquets and festivities, in which no man could play a better part than Leicester. Not Matthias, nor Anjou, nor King Philip, nor the emperor Charles, in their triumphal progresses, had been received with more spontaneous or more magnificent demonstrations. Beside himself with rapture, Leicester almost assumed the god. In Delft he is said so far to have forgotten himself as to declare that his family had — in person of Lady Jane Grey, his father, and brother — been unjustly deprived of the crown of England; an indiscretion which caused a shudder in all who heard him.

Spain moved slowly. Philip the Prudent was not sudden or rash, but his whole life had proved and was to prove him inflexible in his purposes, and patient in his attempts to carry them into effect. Before the fall of Antwerp he had matured his scheme for the invasion of England, in most of its details — a necessary part of which was of course the reduction of Holland and Zealand.

What now was the disposition and what the means of the provinces to do their part in the contest? If the twain, as Holland wished, had become of one flesh, would England have been the loser? Was it quite sure that Elizabeth — had she even accepted the less compromising title which she refused — would not have been quite as much the protected as the "protectress"?

It is very certain that the English, on their arrival in the provinces, were singularly impressed by the opulent and stately appearance of the country and its inhabitants. Notwithstanding the tremendous war which the

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Hollanders had been waging against Spain for twenty years, their commerce had continued to thrive, and their resources to increase.

But the rank and file of the English army needed strengthening. The soldiers required shoes and stockings, bread and meat, and for these articles there were not the necessary funds.

The English soldiers became mere barefoot starving beggars in the streets, as had never been the case in the worst of times, when the states were their paymasters.^c

The states-general, being assembled at the Hague, did not limit their welcome to mere empty compliments. They passed a resolution, January 10th, 1586, conferring on Leicester, in addition to the queen's commission, the absolute government of the Netherlands, as it had been exercised in the reign of Charles V; and joined to this office those of captain and admiral-general of the United Provinces. By this step the states had gone too far to recede, or the manner in which their offer was received by Leicester might have opened their eyes to the real nature of their rash and misplaced confidence. On the proposition to join the council of state with him in the administration, he refused to accept an authority so greatly circumscribed, and the states were obliged to concede that, besides the two Englishmen who had a vote in the council, he himself might appoint a member for each province out of a double number nominated by them. On this condition, he consented to assume the government, in which he no sooner found himself established than he began to aim at that uncontrolled power for which he had so early and so undisguisably shown his desire.

If the states-general designed, by conferring the government on Leicester, to conciliate the favour of the queen, or to involve her as a principal in their quarrel, they found themselves widely mistaken; since Elizabeth felt the most violent anger at their proceedings. She immediately sent her ambassador, Sir Thomas Heneage, to the Hague, to complain, as of an extreme insult and contempt offered to her, that her vassal should be allowed to assume the sovereignty after she herself had refused it. At the same time, she laid her commands upon Leicester to exercise no more authority than his commission from her warranted. The states justified themselves with an appearance of great humility, at the same time contriving to give their new governor pretty intelligible notice of the precarious tenure by which he held his dignity.



GROOTE KERK OF HAARLEM, WHICH SUFFERED FROM THE SPANISH SIEGE

The haughty tone assumed by Elizabeth towards the states was no whit lowered in the mouth of her vassal. Leicester issued an edict forbidding the transport of provisions or ammunition to any enemy's or neutral country, and commanding that all mercantile intercourse by bills of exchange or otherwise should cease between the United Provinces and Spain, France, and the nations of the Baltic. The states of Holland and Zealand had, in the last year, issued an edict of the like import as regarded that part of the Netherlands in possession of their enemies, which, as it was suffering under severe scarcity, and not easily supplied by other nations, was the surest way of inflicting damage upon them. But with respect to Spain and Portugal, the case was far different: since, as they could be plentifully supplied by England, Scotland, Denmark, and the Hanse towns, the measure had no other effect than to deprive Holland of an advantageous trade, and throw it into the hands of those nations. The strong representations of the states of Holland to this effect were passed over unheeded by Leicester.

Besides the losses which the commerce of Holland suffered in consequence of this edict, incalculable damage was at this time inflicted upon it by the unceasing piracies of the English. The navigation of the Channel was rendered so unsafe to the Dutch that their ships, trading to the west, were obliged to perform the tedious and dangerous circuit round the north of Scotland.¹

Another cause of dissatisfaction between the states-general and Leicester was the institution by the latter of a council of finance, of which he appointed the count of Mors and Sir Henry Killigrew presidents, and James Ringault the treasurer. The creation of this body was vehemently opposed by the council of state, not only as contrary to the instructions they were sworn to observe, and by which they were bound to provide for the administration of the finances, but as throwing the public moneys, entirely into the hands of foreigners, especially of Ringault, whose unfitness for the office conferred on him was notorious. Leicester, nevertheless, declaring that he was in no wise bound by the opinions of the council, persisted in his design, and visited the advocate of Utrecht, Paul Buys, who had declared his opinion of Ringault in somewhat bold terms, with the effects of his high displeasure. Buys remained in prison till the next year, when he was released by the states-general.

While the earl of Leicester was thus embarrassing the domestic affairs of the United Provinces, the prince of Parma was pushing the war, with his usual prosperity, close to their boundaries. Sir John Norris and Eohenlohe having captured the fort of Batenburg, Parma advanced in person to the walls of Grave, which he cannonaded incessantly. The defenders suddenly lost courage, and, by their clamours and entreaties, prevailed upon the sieur de Hemert, the governor, to surrender the same day. The earl of Leicester was on his march to relieve Grave, when he was met by Hemert, with the news of its capitulation. In a furious passion of anger, he retraced his steps to Utrecht, taking Hemert with him, whom he caused to be tried for high treason before a council of war, and executed. The death of this officer alienated the minds of many of the nobles in the provinces.

The sincerity of the professions made by Leicester, on this occasion, of his anxiety to maintain fidelity and military discipline, was strongly suspected by those who saw him bestow his highest favour and countenance on two of his own countrymen, of whom one, Rowland York, was a devoted adherent of Hembyze, in Ghent, and had afterwards been chiefly instrumental in de-

¹ Ambassadors being sent into England in 1589 to remonstrate with the queen on this subject, it was alleged, according to Bor,^a that the losses sustained by the Holland and Zealand merchants amounted, within three years, to 3,000,000 guilders.

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livering up Brussels to the royalists; and the other, Captain Welsh, had borne the principal share in the sale and surrender of Alost.

Venloo and Neuss (or Nuys) next fell before the victorious arms of Parma. During the siege of Neuss, Leicester commanded Sir Philip Sidney to undertake an invasion of Flanders. Under his brilliant auspices, the young Prince Maurice commenced his glorious military career, and wetted his maiden sword in the capture of the small town of Axel.

At length, in the month of August, Leicester took the field in person at the head of an army of 8,000 infantry¹ and 3,000 cavalry; but, not sufficiently strong to encounter Parma, whose forces numbered 12,000 of the former and 3,500 of the latter, he sat down before Doesborgh, while his adversary was engaged at the siege of Rhyberg. In this his first military undertaking he was happily successful, as Doesborgh surrendered without waiting for an assault. Thence he marched to besiege Zutphen. Parma, well aware that this important town was but slenderly provided, sent forward three hundred wagons laden with corn, under a convoy. They had arrived at the village of Warnsfeld, about half a mile from Zutphen, when a body of musketeers and cavalry sallied out, headed by Sir Philip Sidney and several of the English volunteers. The English troops commenced the attack with extraordinary vigour, and forced their adversaries to retreat; during the engagement, however, Verdugo, having been warned of the approach of the convoy, advanced at the head of a small body of troops and brought the supplies safely into the town.^e

DEATH OF SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

This battle, in which the English showed such bravery, yet also such useless rashness, has been the subject of much controversy, the number of English present being set as high as 3,400, though Motley^c accepts Leicester's official report that there were 550 English engaged and Parma's statement that the Spanish numbered 3,100. As often happens in war reports, the accounts of rival generals are most discrepant concerning each other's losses, Leicester stating that 33 English were killed or wounded, and 250 to 350 Spaniards, while Parma sets the Spanish loss at 9 killed and 29 wounded, and the English at 200 killed. The truth of this matter is probably that about 33 Englishmen were lost and about 38 Spaniards. But the Spaniards accomplished their purposes and victualled the town.

The true fame of the skirmish rises from the fact that it put an end to the beautiful career of Sir Philip Sidney. Seeing that old Sir William Pelham fought in light armour, he threw off his own cuishes, or thigh-guards, and rode everywhere in the thick of the fight. Finally, having had one horse killed under him, he mounted another and charged through the Spanish ranks: a musket-ball shattered his unprotected thigh; and his horse, too restive to control, carried him a mile and a half back to his own entrenchments. It was here that the famous incident probably occurred which hallows his fame: for his attendants brought him a bottle of water to quench his burning thirst; but, seeing a dying English soldier cast his eyes longingly at the flask, Sidney handed it to him instantly, saying, "Thy necessity is even greater than mine."

Anecdotes of humanity in time of battle are always cherished by the populace and suspected by the critical historian, and this incident has not

¹ Among them was a regiment of 1,400 Irish, whom Strada^d describes as "a rude and wild race, naked from the hips upward; they walked on high stilts, by means of which they were able to cross rivers, and were formidable for their skill in the use of the bow."

escaped incredulity. The story seems to have appeared first in a biography by Sidney's friend Lord Brooke.ⁱ Motley^c says that he had "searched in vain for its confirmation through many contemporary letters and chronicles," yet he concludes that "there is no reason for rejecting its authenticity." The incident is comparable for its exquisite beauty with a self-sacrificing act of Alexander the Great during the desert-march of his troops.

Of the battle itself, Froude^k says, "No dispositions could apparently have been worse than those which Leicester made." He now gave up hope of conquering Zutphen except by siege and retired to winter quarters. His campaign had been, says Froude, "like a blaze of straw." He adds: "It was well for England, it was well for the queen, that those who were entrusted with the interests and honour of their country were not all such as Leicester, and were not all within reach of her own paralysing hand." Fortunately the time of his stay in the Netherlands was short.^a

THE FAILURE OF LEICESTER (1587)

Leicester's conduct was now become quite intolerable to the states. His incapacity and presumption were every day more evident and more revolting. He retired to the town of Utrecht; and pushed his injurious conduct to such an extent that he became an object of utter hatred to the provinces. Conferences took place at the Hague between Leicester and the states, in which Barneveld overwhelmed his contemptible shuffling by the force of irresistible eloquence and well-deserved reproaches; and after new acts of treachery this unworthy favourite at last set out for England, to lay an account of his government at the feet of the queen.¹

The growing hatred against England may be excused, from the various instances of treachery displayed, not only by the commander-in-chief but by several of his inferiors in command. A strong fort, near Zutphen, under the government of Rowland York, the town of Deventer under that of William Stanley, and subsequently Gelderland under a Scotchman named Pallot, were delivered up to the Spaniards by these men; and about the same time the English cavalry committed some excesses in Gelderland and Holland, which added to the prevalent prejudice against the nation in general. This enmity was no longer to be concealed. The partisans of Leicester were one by one, under plausible pretexts, removed from the council of state; and Elizabeth having required from Holland the exportation into England of a large quantity of rye, it was firmly but respectfully refused, as inconsistent with the wants of the provinces.

Prince Maurice, relieved of the caprice and jealousy of Leicester, now united in himself the whole power of command, and commenced that brilliant course of conduct which consolidated the independence of his country and elevated him to the first rank of military glory. His early efforts were turned to the suppression of the partiality which in some places existed for English domination.^d

The miserable condition of the Spanish Netherlands, and the difficulty of finding supplies for his troops, caused the duke of Parma to delay taking the field until late in the summer; when, making a feint attack upon Ostend, he afterwards commenced a vigorous siege of Sluys. This hastened the

[¹ After he left, a secret document was found in which he instructed the English governors to pay no heed to the commands of the states, to release no prisoners, and accept no order of removal. This discovery emphasized the general distrust of the English, and led the states to declare Maurice "prince" and to require an oath of allegiance to him.]

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return of the Earl of Leicester to the Netherlands, who arrived in Ostend with seven thousand foot and five hundred horse; the queen having placed in his hands the whole of the £18,000 appointed for the payment of the soldiers.

Leicester made an attempt to master the fort of Blankenburg, in the neighbourhood of the enemy's camp; but on intelligence that Parma was approaching to give him battle, he hastily retreated to Ostend. As there were, therefore, no hopes of relief from the English, and all the artillery in the town was destroyed, except four pieces, the governor, Arnold de Groeneveldt, proposed a capitulation, which Parma granted, on highly honourable conditions. The loss of Sluys exasperated the dissensions between Leicester and the states into undisguised and irreconcilable hostility. He spared no pains to throw on them the blame of this miscarriage, accusing them (not, indeed, wholly without grounds) of neglecting to provide either sufficient troops, funds, or ammunition.

The states, on the other hand, possessed a powerful weapon against Leicester in an intercepted letter to his secretary Junius, desiring him to use his influence with the well-disposed in the provinces to bestow on him an authority free from the continual opposition and countermining of the states, who ought to be content with the share of power they had enjoyed under Charles V and his son, so that he might be sovereign in reality, and not in appearance only.

But it was not with the states alone that Leicester was at variance; the English ambassador Buckhurst, Sir John Norris, Prince Maurice, and the count of Hohenlohe alike shared his resentment. Leicester even entertained the design of seizing the person of the prince, together with Jan Olden-Barneveld, and conveying them to England; of which the latter having received information, they retired precipitately from the Hague to Delft.

While thus at issue with all the authorities of the state, Leicester had still a powerful party among the clergy, whom he affected to treat on all occasions with the most profound consideration and respect. Guided and fostered by the preachers, the time of popular opinion had, during the first part of Leicester's government, set strongly in his favour against the states. But the surrender of Deventer and the fort of Zutphen had given the first shock to his popularity, which rapidly declined after the fall of Sluys; and the conduct he now thought fit to pursue was such as might well have annihilated the little that remained.

Eight of the nobles of Utrecht having ventured to present a petition for the restoration of their former customs and privileges, they were seized all on one day, and confined in the public prison; an act which, though disavowed by Leicester, excited such an uproar against him in the city, that he was fain to retire to North Holland, where he possessed a devoted partisan in Theodore Sonoy, to whom he had given a commission as governor of that district, independent of the stadholder, Prince Maurice. This event was followed by a far more dangerous disturbance at Leyden, where a number of refugees from Flanders and Brabant formed a conspiracy to deliver the town into the hands of Leicester, which was only prevented by a timely and fortuitous discovery. The states, at the same time, as well those of Holland as the states-general, evinced their doubts of their personal safety by transferring their assemblies from the Hague to the fortified town of Haarlem.

Greatly alarmed at these unequivocal demonstrations of hostile feeling, and feeling too surely that his authority was irretrievably gone, Leicester retired to Flushing, where he shortly after received a summons to return to England, through Lord Herbert, whom the queen had appointed her

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ambassador to the United Provinces. Having taken leave of the states in a letter, couched in terms considerably more mild and moderate than any of his previous communications, he set sail from Zealand. Shortly after his arrival in England, an accusation of maladministration in his government in the Netherlands was brought against him by Lord Buckhurst, from the effects of which the queen permitted him to screen himself under the plea of her private instructions; she even detained Buckhurst a prisoner in his own house for several months; but obliged Leicester, nevertheless, to execute a formal act of resignation early in the following year, which finally terminated his misguided and unfortunate government.

But the Act of Resignation remained some time unpublished; and the soldiers, of whom a great portion were English, took occasion from thence to refuse obedience to the council and Prince Maurice; being, as they declared, still bound by their oath to the late governor. The garrisons of Medemblik, Hoorn, Naarden, Workum, Heusden, and other places, encouraged by secret emissaries from Leicester, were in a state of revolt from this ostensible reason. Prince Maurice wrote to the privy council in England, making heavy complaints of the conduct of their countrymen and partisans in the provinces; in consequence of which, Willoughby and Sir Thomas Killigrew, received orders from the queen to disavow in her name all acts of sedition against the council or the prince, pretended to be done for her service. The effects of this measure, together with the publication of the Act of Resignation by Leicester, were beneficial in the extreme.

The time, indeed, was now come when all trivial dissensions, all petty jealousies, should be hushed. The gigantic armada, which was to crush England at a blow, was now ready. Henceforth, she must fight hand in hand with Holland.^e



MAURICE, PRINCE OF ORANGE
(1567-1625)

THE SPANISH ARMADA (1588)

Irritated and mortified by the assistance which Elizabeth had given to the revolted provinces, Philip resolved to employ his whole power in attempting the conquest of England itself; hoping afterwards to effect with ease the subjugation of the Netherlands. He caused to be built, in almost every port of Spain and Portugal, galleons, carricks, and other ships of war of the largest dimensions; and at the same time gave orders to the duke of Parma to assemble in the harbours of Flanders as many vessels as he could collect together. This prodigious force obtained, in Spain, the ostentatious title of the Invincible Armada.

The details of the progress and the failure of this celebrated attempt are so thoroughly the province of English history, that they would be in

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this place superfluous. But it must not be forgotten that the glory of the proud result was amply shared by the new republic, whose existence depended on it. While Howard and Drake held the British fleet in readiness to oppose the Spanish armada, that of Holland, consisting of but twenty-five ships, under the command of Justin of Nassau, prepared to take a part in the conflict. This gallant though illegitimate scion of the illustrious house whose name he upheld on many occasions, proved himself on the present worthy of such a father as William and such a brother as Maurice. While the duke of Medina Sidonia, ascending the channel as far as Dunkirk, there expected the junction of the duke of Parma with his important reinforcement, Justin of Nassau, by a constant activity and a display of intrepid talent, contrived to block up the whole expected force in the ports of Flanders from Lillo to Dunkirk. The duke of Parma found it impossible to force a passage on any one point; and was doomed to the mortification of knowing that the attempt was frustrated, and the whole force of Spain frittered away, discomfited, and disgraced, from the want of a co-operation which he could not, however, reproach himself for having withheld. The issue of the memorable expedition which cost Spain years of preparation, thousands of men, and millions of treasure, was received in the country which sent it forth with consternation and rage. Philip alone possessed or affected an apathy which he covered with a veil of mock devotion.^d

The grief and disappointment of Parma at the destruction of this powerful armada were intense. In accordance with the advice of others, rather than his own judgment, he determined to employ his large and hitherto useless army in the siege of Bergen-op-Zoom. It was the last town in Brabant left to the states except Gertruydenberg. The preservation of Bergen was chiefly owing to the extraordinary courage and dexterity of two Englishmen, Grimston, a lieutenant of the garrison, and one Redhead, a sutler. They had been offered large bribes, by two Spanish prisoners, to deliver the North Fort into the hands of Parma. By the orders of Lord Willoughby, to whom they discovered the affair, they pretended to give a ready consent to the proposal, and secretly left the camp, provided with letters from the two Spaniards to the duke of Parma. Parma obliged them to take an oath on the sacrament that they were acting in good faith: still, however, doubting somewhat of their fidelity, he ordered their hands to be tied behind them, and placed a Spanish soldier as guard over each, with a naked poniard, ready to plunge into their breasts on the slightest suspicion of treachery; thus secured, he ventured to entrust them with the conduct of the expedition. The assailants, marching at low water over the drowned land between their camp and the fort, found the gate open, as they expected. About fifty entered, when Willoughby let down the portcullis, and excluded the remainder. Those within were immediately slain or captured; the two who guarded the English prisoners, forgetting, in their confusion and terror, the orders they had received from Parma, allowed them to escape unhurt. The troops on the outside being assailed on their retreat by an ambush on the dike, a great number were slain, and several officers of distinction made prisoners. Grimston and Redhead received a present of 1,000 florins each from the queen, and an annuity of 600 florins.

Parma, therefore, broke up the siege, his troops abandoning the entrenchments in some disorder, and leaving a great portion of their arms, material, and baggage behind them. The count of Mansfeld captured the small town of Wachtendonck, in Gelderland, at the siege of which the bomb-shell was first used, having been invented shortly before by an artisan of Venloo.

Gertruydenberg was delivered, by its English governor, Sir John Wingfield, to Parma on the payment of the arrears due to the troops, and a gratuity of five months' pay in addition. Provoked beyond endurance at this mingled insolence and treachery, the states issued a decree, condemning the whole of the garrison to death as traitors. Several who were arrested in the provinces were executed without form of law.^e

Martin Schenk who had lately, for the last time, gone over to the side of the states, had caused a fort to be built in the isle of Betewe — that possessed of old by the Batavians — which was called by his name, and was considered the key to the passage of the Rhine. From this stronghold he constantly harassed the archbishop of Cologne, and had as his latest exploit surprised and taken the strong town of Bonn (1590). The indefatigable Schenk resolved to make an attempt on the important town of Nimeguen. His enterprise seemed almost crowned with success, when the inhabitants, recovering from their fright, precipitated themselves from the town; forced the assailants to retreat to their boats; and, carrying the combat into those overcharged and fragile vessels, upset several, and among others that which contained Schenk himself, who, covered with wounds, and fighting to the last gasp, was drowned with the greater part of his followers. His body, when recovered, was treated with the utmost indignity, quartered, and hung in portions over the different gates of the city.

The following year (1591) was distinguished by another daring attempt on the part of the Hollanders, but followed by a different result. A captain named Haranguer concerted with one Adrian Vandenberg a plan for the surprise of Breda, on the possession of which prince Maurice had set a great value. The associates contrived to conceal in a boat, laden with turf (which formed the principal fuel of the inhabitants of that part of the country), and of which Vandenberg was master, eighty determined soldiers, and succeeded in arriving close to the city without any suspicion being excited. One of the soldiers, named Mathew Helt, being suddenly affected with a violent cough, implored his comrades to put him to death, to avoid the risk of a discovery. But a corporal of the city guard having inspected the cargo with unsuspecting carelessness, the immolation of the brave soldier became unnecessary, and the boat was dragged into the basin by the assistance of some of the very garrison who were so soon to fall victims to the stratagem. At midnight the concealed soldiers quitted their hiding places, leaped on shore, killed the sentinels, and easily became masters of the citadel. Prince Maurice, following close with his army, soon forced the town to submit.

The duke of Parma had snatched a short interval for the purpose of recruiting his health at the waters of Spa. While at that place he received urgent orders from Philip to abandon for a while all his proceedings in the Netherlands, and to hasten into France with his whole disposable force, to assist the army of the League. The duke of Parma received his uncle's orders with great repugnance. He nevertheless obeyed; and leaving count Mansfeld at the head of the government, he conducted his troops against the royal opponent.

But while this expedition added greatly to the renown of the general, it considerably injured the cause of Spain in the Low Countries. Prince Maurice, taking prompt advantage of the absence of his great rival, had made himself master of several fortresses; and some Spanish regiments having mutinied against the commanders left behind by the duke of Parma, others, encouraged by the impunity they enjoyed, were ready on the slightest pretext to follow their example. Maurice did not lose a single opportunity

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of profiting by circumstances so favourable; and even after the return of Alessandro he seized on Nimeguen, despite all the efforts of the Spanish army.^d

THE MILITARY GENIUS OF MAURICE

With the reduction of Nimeguen, which involved the submission of nearly the whole of Gelderland, in 1591, Prince Maurice terminated his brilliant and successful campaign; having, in the space of five months, mastered Zutphen, Deventer, Hulst, and Nimeguen, besides Delfzijl and other smaller forts. The lateness of the season, and the continued rains, together with the sickness of Barneveld, upon whose able and active co-operation he chiefly depended, induced him to arrest his progress for the present, and withdraw his army into winter quarters. On his return to Holland, he was greeted with unbounded joy and affection by all ranks of men. Under his auspices had dawned the first bright hopes — the first firm expectation of ultimate success to the cause of freedom. The military undertakings of his father had been peculiarly and uniformly unfortunate; the small advantages gained by Leicester had been more than counterbalanced by the discontents and cabals which had grown rife under his government: hitherto the provinces had had to struggle for their actual existence in miserable dependence on the aid of foreign princes; now they were able to treat on equal terms with those powers which had before disdained to receive them as subjects, and to render effective assistance to their ally the king of France. Their own boundaries were not only secured, but extended; and the enemy was harassed on every side by an army whose small numerical force was more than compensated by the celerity of its movements, its admirable spirit, and the perfect knowledge which every one of its members possessed of his respective duties.

The people beheld the hitherto invincible duke of Parma, indisputably the first captain of his age, retreat, or rather fly before their young general.

Prince Maurice, indeed, though the ostensible, was not the sole nor perhaps even the principal creator of the vast change that had been worked in the condition of the provinces. A powerful though unseen hand had now grasped the pivot on which public affairs turned. Jan Olden-Barneveld, from the time of his appointment to the office of advocate of Holland, had begun to acquire that influence which ultimately became almost unbounded; he it was whose eloquence prevailed with the states to consent at once to all the beneficial measures which his fertile genius suggested; and whose comprehensive intellect combined those plans which his unceasing diligence, in supplying the army with material, ammunition, and provisions enabled Prince Maurice to execute.^e

Nevertheless Prince Maurice must be recognised as one of the great military geniuses of all time. He was the true creator of the Dutch army, and recognised that a small body of highly trained patriots was far superior to the rabbles of mercenary troops on which the fate of Holland had been hanging so long. In his tactics he had the aid of his cousin Louis William, stadholder of Friesland, who revived the old Greek and Roman manœuvres in the evolutions of small bodies of men trained to the utmost agility. These small units of high mobility, in place of the cumbersome masses in vogue, excited the ridicule of the old school; and the suppression of the system of "blind names," by which a colonel often drew pay for a thousand men while actually recruiting only a hundred, excited still greater hostility. The private soldiers were similarly outraged by being compelled to dig trenches and build fortifications — a supposedly menial task for which peasants had been previously hired.

[1592 A.D.]

But victory is the soldier's consolation for every ill, and Maurice soon had an army which was a model for all Europe in its organisation and administration, as in its proficiency in field manoeuvre and siege work.

The modernity of his ideas is also seen in the fact that he took away from his cavalry the spear and gave them the carbine, thus making them mounted infantry, an ideal recently revived.

In any history of the art of war, the name of Maurice must appear as an important contributor to progress.^a

THE DEATH OF PARMA: HIS SUCCESSOR (1592)

The duke of Parma, daily breaking down under the progress of disease, and agitated by reverses, repaired again to Spa, in 1592, taking at once every possible means for the recruitment of his army and the recovery of his health, on which its discipline and the chances of success now so evidently depended. But all his plans were again frustrated by a renewal of Philip's peremptory orders to march once more into France, to uphold the failing cause of the League against the intrepidity and talent of Henry IV.

On his return to the Netherlands (1592), the duke found himself again under the necessity of repairing to Spa, in search of some relief from the suffering which was considerably increased by the effects of a wound received in this last campaign. In spite of his shattered constitution, he maintained to the latest moment the most active endeavours for the reorganisation of his army; and he was preparing for a new expedition into France, when he was surprised by death on the 3rd of December, 1592, at the abbey of St. Vaast, near Arras, at the age of forty-seven years.

Alessandro of Parma was certainly one of the most remarkable and, it may be added, one of the greatest characters of his day. Most historians have upheld him even higher perhaps than he should be placed on the scale; asserting that he can be reproached with very few of the vices of the age in which he lived. Others consider this judgment too favourable, and accuse him of participation in all the crimes of Philip, whom he served so zealously. But even allowing that Alessandro's fine qualities were sullied by his complicity in these odious measures, we must still in justice admit that they were too much in the spirit of the times, and particularly of the school in which he was trained; and while we lament that his political or private faults place him on so low a level, we must rank him as one of the very first masters in the art of war in his own or any other age.

He had chosen the count of Mansfeld for his successor, and the nomination was approved by the king. He entered on his government under most disheartening circumstances. The rapid conquests of Prince Maurice in Brabant and Flanders were scarcely less mortifying than the total disorganisation into which those two provinces had fallen. They were ravaged by bands of robbers called Picaroons, whose audacity reached such a height that they opposed in large bodies the forces sent for their suppression by the government. They on one occasion killed the provost of Flanders, and burned his lieutenant in a hollow tree; and on another they mutilated a whole troop of the national militia, and their commander, with circumstances of most revolting cruelty.

The authority of governor-general, though not the title, was now fully shared by the count of Fuentes, who was sent to Brussels by the king of Spain; and the ill effects of this double vicerealty were soon seen in the brilliant progress of Prince Maurice and the continual reverses sustained by

[1593-1596 A.D.]

the royalist armies. The king, still bent on projects of bigotry, sacrificed without scruple men and treasure for the overthrow of Henry IV and the success of the League. The affairs of the Netherlands seemed now a secondary object; and he drew largely on his forces in that country for reinforcements to the ranks of his tottering allies. A final blow was, however, struck against the hopes of intolerance in France, and to the existence of the League, by the conversion of Henry IV to the Catholic religion; he deeming theological disputes, which put the happiness of a whole kingdom in jeopardy, as quite subordinate to the public good.

Such was the prosperity of the United Provinces that they had been enabled to send a large supply, both of money and men, to the aid of Henry, their constant and generous ally. And notwithstanding this, their armies and fleets, so far from suffering diminution, were augmented day by day. Philip, resolved to summon up all his energy for the revival of the war against the republic, now appointed the archduke Ernest, brother of the emperor Rudolf, to the post which the disunion of Mansfeld and Fuentes rendered as embarrassing as it had become inglorious. This prince, of a gentle and conciliatory character, was received at Brussels with great magnificence and general joy; his presence reviving the deep-felt hopes of peace entertained by the suffering people. Such were also the cordial wishes of the prince¹; but more than one design, formed at this period against the life of Prince Maurice, frustrated every expectation of the kind.

A priest of the province of Namur, named Michael Renichon, disguised as a soldier, was the new instrument meant to strike another blow at the greatness of the house of Nassau, in the person of its gallant representative, Prince Maurice; as also in that of his brother, Frederick Henry, then ten years of age. On the confession of the intended assassin, he was employed by Count Barlaymont to murder the two princes. Renichon happily mismanaged the affair, and betrayed his intention. He was arrested at Breda, conducted to the Hague, and there tried and executed on the 3rd of June, 1594.

In this same year a soldier named Peter Dufour embarked in a like atrocious plot. He, too, was seized and executed before he could carry it into effect.

Prince Maurice, in the meantime, with his usual activity, passed the Maas and the Rhine, and invested and quickly took the town of Groningen (July 24th, 1594),² by which he consummated the establishment of the republic, and secured its rank among the principal powers of Europe.

The archduke Ernest, finding all his efforts for peace frustrated, and all hopes of gaining his object by hostility to be vain, became a prey to disappointment and regret, and died, from the effects of a slow fever, on the 21st of February, 1595; leaving to the count of Fuentes the honours and anxieties of the government, subject to the ratification of the king. This nobleman began the exercise of his temporary functions by an irruption into France, at the head of a small army; war having been declared against Spain by Henry IV, who, on his side, had despatched the admiral De Villars to attack

[¹ He convened the states-general of the loyal provinces in 1595, and sent a proposal of peace to the Hague on the basis of the pacification of Ghent. Blok^m quotes the protests of the loyal provinces against the ruinous Spanish policy; they protested that little remained to them "except one great heart-break and despair" (*sinon ung très grand crève-cœur et désespoir*).]

[² Of this success by Maurice, Motley^c says: "Again the commander-in-chief enlightened the world by an exhibition of a more artistic and humane style of warfare than previously to his appearance on the military stage had been known." In May, 1596, the states were actually admitted as equals in a tripartite alliance against Spain. Queen Elizabeth bitterly opposed such recognition of a popular government, but was compelled to take the step, and the treaty was signed at the Hague, October 31st, 1596.]

Philip's possessions in Hainault and Artois. This gallant officer lost a battle and his life in the contest; and Fuentes, encouraged by the victory, took some frontier towns.

Some trifling affairs took place in Brabant; but the arrival of the archduke Albert, whom the king had appointed to succeed his brother Ernest in the office of governor-general, deprived Fuentes of any further opportunity of signalising his talents for supreme command. Albert arrived at Brussels on the 11th of February, 1596, accompanied by Philip William, the prince of Orange, who, when count of Buren, had been carried off from the university of Louvain, twenty-eight years previously, and held captive in Spain during the whole of that period.

THE ARCHDUKE ALBERT

The archduke Albert, fifth son of the emperor Maximilian II, and brother of Rudolf, stood high in the opinion of Philip his uncle, and merited his reputation for talents, bravery, and prudence. He had been early made archbishop of Toledo, and afterwards cardinal; but his profession was not that of these nominal dignities. He was a warrior and politician of considerable capacity; and had for some years faithfully served the king, as viceroy of Portugal. But Philip meant him for the more independent situation of sovereign of the Netherlands, and at the same time destined him to be the husband of his daughter Isabella. He now sent him, in the capacity of governor-general, to prepare the way for the important change.

He opened his first campaign early; and, by a display of clever manœuvring, which threatened an attempt to force the French to raise the siege of La Fère, in the heart of Picardy, he concealed his real design — the capture of Calais; and he succeeded in its completion almost before it was suspected. By prudently avoiding a battle, to which he was constantly provoked by Henry IV who commanded the French army in person, he established his character for military talent of no ordinary degree.

He at the same time made overtures of reconciliation to the United Provinces, and hoped that the return of the prince of Orange would be a means of effecting so desirable a purpose. But the Dutch were not to be deceived by the apparent sincerity of Spanish negotiation. They even doubted the sentiments of the prince of Orange, whose attachments and principles had been formed in so hated a school; and nothing passed between them and him but mutual civilities. They clearly evinced their disapprobation of his intended visit to Holland; and he consequently fixed his residence in Brussels, passing his life in an inglorious neutrality.

A naval expedition formed in this year by the English and Dutch against Cadiz, commanded by the earl of Essex,¹ was crowned with brilliant success, and somewhat consoled the provinces for the contemporary exploits of the archduke. But the following year opened with an affair which at once proved his unceasing activity and added largely to the reputation of his rival, Prince Maurice. The former had detached the count of Varax, with about six thousand men, for the purpose of invading the province of Holland; but Maurice, with equal energy and superior talent, followed his movements; came up with him near Turnhout, on the 24th of January, 1597, and after a

[¹ The Dutch admiral was Duivenvoorde, lord of Warmond, and the combined fleet, destroyed a Spanish squadron in Cadiz, July, 1596, returning home with booty. Previously, in 1595, some five hundred Netherlandish ships, nearly half the entire merchant marine, were released from Spanish and Portuguese harbors where they had been detained. Their release was partly for conciliation and partly because of Spain's need for the supplies they brought.]

[1597-1598 A.D.]

sharp action, of which the Dutch cavalry bore the whole brunt, Varax was killed, and his troops defeated with considerable loss.¹

This was in its consequences a most disastrous affair to the archduke. His army was disorganised, and his finances exhausted; while the confidence of the states in their troops and their general was considerably raised. During this year Prince Maurice took a number of towns in rapid succession; and the states, according to their custom, caused various medals, in gold, silver, and copper, to be struck, to commemorate the victories which had signalled their arms.

Philip II, feeling himself approaching the termination of his long and agitating career, now wholly occupied himself in negotiations for peace with France. Henry IV desired it as anxiously. The pope, Clement VIII, encouraged by his exhortations this mutual inclination. The king of Poland sent ambassadors to the Hague and to London, to induce the states and Queen Elizabeth to become parties in a general pacification. These overtures led to no conclusion; but the conferences between France and Spain went on with apparent cordiality and great promptitude, and a peace was concluded between these powers at Vervins, on the 2nd of May, 1598.

The states had used all their influence to keep Elizabeth from making peace with Spain, and abandoning her alliance with them. Their delay in paying their debt to her had, however, occasioned frequent outbursts of temper and even of threats of war, but terms were finally patched up.^a It was agreed that she should henceforth be released from the obligation to afford any further subsidies to the provinces, who engaged to assist her with forty ships in any naval expedition she might undertake against Spain, and with five thousand foot and five hundred horse, or an equivalent in money, in case the king of Spain should invade any part of her dominions; the debt which she herself had estimated at two millions was fixed at £800,000, to be paid by instalments of £30,000 a year until the half were liquidated; the mode of discharging the remainder to be arranged at the end of the war, when, if any of the first moiety was still unpaid, the annual sum should be reduced to £20,000. The states also bound themselves to pay the garrisons of Briel and Flushing to the number of 1,150 men. They were permitted to retain the English troops already in the Netherlands at their own expense, and the queen was to continue to name one English member in the council of state.²

THE PROVINCES CEDED TO ALBERT AND ISABELLA (1598)

Shortly after the publication of the treaty of Vervins, another important act was made known to the world, by which Philip ceded to Albert and Isabella, on their being formally affianced — a ceremony which now took place — the sovereignty of Burgundy and the Netherlands. This act bears

¹ This action may be taken as a fair sample of the difficulty with which any estimate can be formed of the relative losses on such occasions. The Dutch historians state the loss of the royalists, in killed, at upwards of 2,000. Meteren,^m a good authority, says the peasants buried 2,250; while Bentivoglio,^o an Italian writer in the interest of Spain, makes the number exactly half that amount. Grotius^l says that the loss of the Dutch was four men killed. Bentivoglio states it at 100. But, at either computation, it is clear that the affair was a brilliant one on the part of Prince Maurice. [Motley^e says of it: "The nation was electrified, transformed in an instant. Who now should henceforth have to say that one Spanish fighting man was equal to five or ten Hollanders? Here in the open field a Spanish army, after in vain refusing a combat and endeavouring to escape, had literally bitten the dust before a fourth of its own number. And this effect was a permanent one."]

[² Blokⁿ well calls these "pretty stiff terms," the only cause for satisfaction being the acceptance of only one Englishman on the council of state.]

[1598-1599 A.D.]

date the 6th of May, 1598, and was proclaimed with all the solemnity due to so important a transaction. It contained thirteen articles; and was based on the misfortunes which the absence of the sovereign had hitherto caused to the Low Countries. The Catholic religion was declared that of the state, in its full integrity. The provinces were guaranteed against dismemberment. The archdukes, by which title the joint sovereigns were designated without any distinction of sex, were secured in the possession, with right of succession to their children; and a provision was added, that in default of posterity their possessions should revert to the Spanish crown. The infanta Isabella soon sent her procuration to the archduke, her affianced husband, giving him full power and authority to take possession of the ceded dominions in her name as in his own; and Albert was inaugurated with great pomp at Brussels, on the 22nd of August.

Having put everything in order for the regulation of the government during his absence, he set out for Spain, for the purpose of accomplishing his spousals, and bringing back his bride to the chief seat of their joint power. But before his departure he wrote to the various states of the republic, and to Prince Maurice himself, strongly recommending submission and reconciliation. These letters received no answer; a new plot against the life of Prince Maurice, by a wretched individual named Peter Pann, having aroused the indignation of the country, and determined it to treat with suspicion and contempt every insidious proposition from the tyranny it defied.

THE DEATH OF PHILIP II (1598)

Albert placed his uncle, the cardinal Andrew of Austria, at the head of the temporary government, and set out on his journey. He had not made much progress when he received accounts of the demise of Philip II, who died, after long suffering, and with great resignation, on the 13th of September, 1598, at the age of seventy-two. Albert was several months on his journey through Germany; and the ceremonials of his union with the infanta did not take place till the 18th of April, 1599, when it was finally solemnised in the city of Valencia in Spain.

This transaction, by which the Netherlands were positively erected into a separate sovereignty, seems naturally to make the limits of another epoch in their history. It completely decided the division between the northern and southern provinces, which, although it had virtually taken place long previous to this period, could scarcely be considered as formally consummated until now.^d

