



CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION OF THE EIGHTY YEARS' WAR

[1625-1648 A.D.]

FREDERICK HENRY succeeded to almost all his brother's titles and employments, and found his new dignities clogged with an accumulation of difficulties sufficient to appal the most determined spirit. Everything seemed to justify alarm and despondency. If the affairs of the republic in India wore an aspect of prosperity, those in Europe presented a picture of past disaster and approaching peril. Disunion and discontent, an almost insupportable weight of taxation, and the disputes of which it was the fruitful source, formed the subjects of internal ill. Abroad were to be seen navigation harassed and trammelled by the pirates of Dunkirk, and the almost defenceless frontiers of the republic exposed to the irruptions of the enemy. The king of Denmark, who endeavoured to make head against the imperialist and Spanish forces, was beaten by Tilly, and made to tremble for the safety of his own states. England did nothing towards the common cause of Protestantism, in consequence of the weakness of the monarch; and civil dissensions for a while disabled France from resuming the system of Henry IV for humbling the house of Austria.

Frederick Henry was at this period in his forty-second year. His military reputation was well established; he soon proved his political talents. He commenced his career by a total change in the tone of government on the subject of sectarian differences. He exercised several acts of clemency in favour of the imprisoned and exiled Arminians, at the same time that he upheld the dominant religion. By these measures he conciliated all parties; and by degrees the fierce spirit of intolerance became subdued. The foreign relations of the United Provinces now presented the anomalous policy of a fleet furnished by the French king, manned by rigid Calvinists, and commanded by a grandson of Admiral Coligny, for the purpose of combating the remainder of the French Huguenots, whom they considered as brothers in religion, though political foes: and during the joint expedition which was undertaken by the allied French and Dutch troops against Rochelle, the stronghold of Protestantism, the preachers of Holland put up prayers for the

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protection of those whom their army was marching to destroy. The states-general, ashamed of this unpopular union, recalled their fleet, after some severe fighting with that of the Huguenots. Cardinal Richelieu and the king of France were for a time furious in their displeasure; but interests of state overpowered individual resentments, and no rupture took place.

Charles I had now succeeded his father on the English throne. He renewed the treaty with the republic, who furnished him with twenty ships to assist his own formidable fleet in his war against Spain. Frederick Henry had, soon after his succession to the chief command, commenced an active course of martial operations and was successful in almost all his enterprises.^b

Maurice had, before his death, made the most strenuous exertions to collect troops for the relief of Breda. Nevertheless, every effort on the part of Prince Frederick Henry to raise the siege or to introduce supplies into the town proved futile; and being reduced to extreme scarcity of provisions, the governor, Justin of Nassau, capitulated to Spinola on favourable conditions in 1625. But the strength of Spain, so imposing in outward appearance, so exhausted in reality, was now put forth only in isolated and convulsive efforts, followed by long intervals of prostrate inaction. The conquest of Breda reduced the spirit and resources of the Spanish army, as the siege of Bergen-op-Zoom had done, to so low an ebb that it was forced to act entirely on the defensive; and the summer of the next year passed without any event worthy of remark. Taking



PIETER PIETERSEN HEIJN, LIEUTENANT-ADMIRAL OF HOLLAND (1578-1629)

advantage of the continued inactivity of the enemy, the prince of Orange commenced the siege of Groenlo with one hundred companies of infantry, fifty-five of cavalry, and ninety pieces of artillery. The capture of this strong town, within the space of a month, and in sight of a hostile army which made strenuous attempts to relieve it, added greatly to the reputation of Frederick Henry, more especially as his brother had in the year 1606 failed in a similar enterprise, under far more favourable circumstances.

But it was on sea that the Dutch constantly gained such advantages as brought at once ruin and dishonour on their enemies. The West India Company, having equipped a fleet of twenty-four vessels, placed them under the command of one Pieter Pietersen Heijn, or "Piet Heijn" of Delfshaven — a man who, by his courage and ability, had raised himself from a low station to the rank of admiral, and had signalled himself, as well by the share he had taken in the conquest of San Salvador as by the destruction of twenty-six Spanish vessels in the last year. He now (1628) received orders to sail towards America, for the purpose of intercepting the Spanish fleet, commonly called the "silver fleet," on its return from thence laden with specie. On his arrival off the island of Havana, he received intelligence that

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the fleet was close at hand and could not escape him; and, in effect, early on the following morning, he fell in with ten ships, which he captured in a few hours. About mid-day eight or nine more galleons were perceived at three leagues' distance, of which the Dutch immediately went in chase under press of sail.

Heijn brought the whole of his booty, except two of the captured vessels, safely into the ports of Holland. It was estimated at 12,000,000 florins, a portion of it being 138,600 lbs-weight of pure silver. On his return the office of lieutenant-admiral, vacant by the death of William of Nassau, who was killed before Groenlo, was in a manner forced upon him, in spite of his modest refusal of a dignity unbefitting, he said, his mean birth and unpolished manners. To acquit himself honourably of his charge, he resolved to undertake the extirpation of the pirates of Dunkirk.

On the 17th of June, 1629, he espied three privateers, to which he gave chase, and coming up with his single ship, which had left the others far behind, he placed himself between two of the enemy's vessels, and fired a broadside into both at the same time. The third discharge of the privateer's guns stretched him dead upon the deck; but his crew, becoming furious at the spectacle, attacked with such vigour that they soon captured both vessels, putting every man on board to death, in obedience to the barbarous custom enjoined by the states. The body of Heijn was interred near that of William, prince of Orange, at Delft, and a monument of white marble erected to his memory.^d

The year 1629 brought three formidable armies at once to the frontiers of the republic, and caused a general dismay all through the United Provinces: but the immense treasures taken from the Spaniards enabled them to make preparations suitable to the danger; and Frederick Henry, supported by his cousin William of Nassau, his natural brother Justin, and other brave and experienced officers, defeated every effort of the enemy. He took many towns in rapid succession; and finally forced the Spaniards to abandon all notion of invading the territories of the republic. Deprived of the powerful talents of Spinola, who was called to command the Spanish troops in Italy, the armies of the archduchess, under the count of Berg, were not able to cope with the genius of the prince of Orange. The consequence was the renewal of negotiations for a second truce. But these were received on the part of the republic with a burst of opposition. All parties seemed decided on that point; and every interest, however opposed on minor questions, combined to give a positive negative on this.

The gratitude of the country for the services of Frederick Henry induced the provinces of which he was stadholder to grant the reversion in this title to his son, a child three years old; and this dignity had every chance of becoming as absolute as it was now pronounced almost hereditary, by the means of an army of 120,000 men devoted to their chief. However, few military occurrences took place, the sea being still chosen as the element best suited to the present enterprises of the republic. In the widely-distant settlements of Brazil and Batavia the Dutch were equally successful; and the East and West India companies acquired eminent power and increasing solidity.

The year 1631 was signalled by an expedition into Flanders consisting

^d According to Cerisier, the states having upon the occasion of his death sent a message of condolence to his mother, an honest peasant who, notwithstanding the elevation of her son, had been content to remain in her original station, she replied: "Ay, I thought what would be the end of him. He was always a vagabond; but I did my best to correct him. He has got no more than he deserved."

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of 18,000 men, intended against Dunkirk, but hastily abandoned, in spite of every probability of success, by the commissioners of the states-general, who accompanied the army and thwarted all the ardour and vigour of the prince of Orange. But another great naval victory in the narrow seas of Zealand recompensed the disappointments of this inglorious affair.

ALLIANCE WITH FRANCE: BELGIAN EFFORTS FOR FREEDOM (1633)

The splendid victories of Gustavus Adolphus against the imperial arms in Germany changed the whole face of European affairs. Protestantism began once more to raise its head; and the important conquests by Frederick Henry of almost all the strong places on the Maas, including Maestricht, the strongest of all, gave the United Provinces their ample share in the glories of the war. The death of the archduchess Isabella, which took place at Brussels in the year 1633, added considerably to the difficulties of Spain in the Belgian provinces.

The defection of the count of Berg, the chief general of their armies, who was actuated by resentment on the appointment of the marquis of Sainte-Croix over his head, threw everything into confusion, in exposing a widespread confederacy among the nobility of these provinces to erect themselves into an independent republic, strengthened by a perpetual alliance with the United Provinces against the power of Spain. But the plot failed, chiefly, it is said, by the imprudence of the king of England, who let the secret slip, from some motives vaguely hinted at, but never sufficiently explained. After the death of Isabella, the prince of Brabant was arrested. The prince of Epinoi and the duke of Burnonville made their escape; and the duke of Aerschot, who was arrested in Spain, was soon liberated, in consideration of some discoveries into the nature of the plot. An armistice, published in 1634, threw this whole affair into complete oblivion.

The king of Spain appointed his brother Ferdinand, a cardinal and archbishop of Toledo, to the dignity of governor-general of the Netherlands. He repaired to Germany at the head of seventeen thousand men, and bore his share in the victory of Nordlingen; after which he hastened to the Netherlands, and made his entry into Brussels in 1634. Richelieu had hitherto only combated the house of Austria in these countries by negotiation and intrigue; but he now entered warmly into the proposals made by Holland, for a treaty offensive and defensive between Louis XIII and the republic. By a treaty soon after concluded (February 8th, 1635), the king of France engaged to invade the Belgian provinces with an army of thirty thousand men, in concert with a Dutch force of equal number. It was agreed that, if Belgium would consent to break from the Spanish yoke, it was to be erected into a free state; if, on the contrary, it would not co-operate for its own freedom, France and Holland were to dismember and to divide it equally.

The plan of these combined measures was soon acted on. The French army took the field under the command of the marshals De Châtillon and De Brézé; and defeated the Spaniards in a bloody battle, near Avein, in the province of Luxemburg, on the 20th of May, 1635, with the loss of four thousand men. The victors soon made a junction with the prince of Orange; and the towns of Tirlemont, St. Trond, and some others, were quickly reduced. The former of these places was taken by assault, and pillaged with circumstances of cruelty that recall the horrors of the early transactions of the war. The prince of Orange was forced to punish severely the authors of these offences. The consequences of this event were highly injurious to the allies.

A spirit of fierce resistance was excited throughout the invaded provinces. Louvain set the first example. The citizens and students took arms for its defence; and the combined forces of France and Holland were repulsed, and forced by want of supplies to abandon the siege and rapidly retreat. The prince-cardinal, as Ferdinand was called, took advantage of this reverse to press the retiring French; recovered several towns, and gained all the advantages as well as glory of the campaign. The remains of the French army, reduced by continual combats, and still more by sickness, finally embarked at Rotterdam to return to France in the ensuing spring, a sad contrast to its brilliant appearance at the commencement of the campaign.

The military events for several ensuing years present nothing of sufficient interest to induce us to record them in detail. A perpetual succession of sieges and skirmishes afford a monotonous picture of isolated courage and skill; but we see none of those great conflicts which bring out the genius of opposing generals, and show war in its grand results, as the decisive means of enslaving or emancipating mankind. The prince-cardinal, one of the many who on this bloody theatre displayed consummate military talents, incessantly employed himself in incursions into the bordering provinces of France, ravaged Picardy, and filled Paris with fear and trembling. He, however, reaped no new laurels when he came into contact with Frederick Henry, who on almost every occasion, particularly that of the siege of Breda in 1637, carried his object in spite of all opposition. The triumphs of war were balanced; but Spain and the Belgian provinces, so long upheld by the talent of the governor-general, were gradually become exhausted. The revolution in Portugal and the succession of the duke of Braganza, under the title of John IV, to the throne of his ancestors, struck a fatal blow to the power of Spain. A strict alliance was concluded between the new monarch of France and Holland; and hostilities against the common enemy were on all sides vigorously continued.^b

It was in this year that the singular mania, "tulipo-mania" as it was afterwards termed, the offspring of wealth and luxury, became prevalent among the Dutch, especially in the province of Holland. The price of tulips suddenly rose to an incredible height, the most esteemed varying from 2,600 guilders to 150 for a single root. Large fortunes were acquired by speculations on this article, which, in Amsterdam alone, involved, it is said, no less a sum than 10,000,000 guilders. Persons of all ranks, sexes, and ages neglected their ordinary avocations to amuse themselves with this novel species of gambling; but as those who purchased were often of slender means and unable to fulfil their engagements, the speculation became so unsafe that men lost their confidence in it, and in course of time it died away of itself. The Hollanders, though still retaining their passion for tulips, have since been able to restrain it within more reasonable bounds. However we may condemn this idle traffic, and however well deserved the ridicule it has incurred, it is still gratifying to reflect in what a state of ease and prosperity, how free from care and light-hearted a people must be, who could find opportunity and inclination to devote their attention to such agreeable trifles.^d

The successes of the republic at sea and in their distant enterprises were continual, and in some instances brilliant. Brazil was gradually falling into the power of the West India Company. The East India possessions were secure. The great victory of Tromp,¹ known by the name of the battle

[¹ He had been made vice-admiral in place of Van Dorp who had in 1637 not only allowed a Spanish fleet carrying four million florins, to escape him, but had allowed the Dunkirk pirates to capture certain Dutch ships.]

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of the Downs, from being fought off the coast of England, on the 21st of October, 1639, raised the naval reputation of Holland as high as it could well be carried. Fifty ships taken, burned, and sunk were the proofs of their admiral's triumph; and the Spanish navy never recovered the loss. The victory was celebrated throughout Europe, and Tromp was the hero of the day. The king of England was, however, highly indignant at the hardihood with which the Dutch admiral broke through the etiquette of territorial respect, and destroyed his country's bitter foes under the very sanction of English neutrality. But the subjects of Charles I did not partake their monarch's feelings. They had no sympathy with arbitrary and tyrannic government; and their joy at the misfortune of their old enemies the Spaniards gave a fair warning of the spirit which afterwards proved so fatal to the infatuated king, who on this occasion would have protected and aided them.

MARRIAGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

In an unsuccessful enterprise in Flanders, in 1640, Count Henry Kasimir of Nassau was mortally wounded, adding another to the list of those of that illustrious family whose lives were lost in the service of their country. His brother, Count William Frederick, succeeded him in his office of stadholder of Friesland; but the same dignity in the provinces of Groningen and Drent devolved on the prince of Orange. The latter had conceived the desire of a royal alliance for his son William. Charles I readily assented to the proposal of the states-general that this young prince should receive the hand of his daughter Mary. Embassies were exchanged; the conditions of the contract agreed on. The marriage took place at Whitehall, May 1st, 1641; Tromp, with an escort of twenty ships, conducted the princess, then twelve years old, to the country of her future husband. The republic did not view with an eye quite favourable this advancing aggrandisement of the house of Orange. Frederick Henry had shortly before been dignified by the king of France, at the suggestion of Richelieu, with the title of "highness," instead of the inferior one of "excellency"; and the states-general, jealous of this distinction granted to their chief magistrate, adopted for themselves the sounding appellation of "high and mighty lords." The prince of Orange, whatever might have been his private views of ambition, had, however, the prudence to silence all suspicion, by the mild and moderate use which he made of the power which he might perhaps have wished to increase but never attempted to abuse.

On the 9th of November, 1641, the prince-cardinal Ferdinand died at Brussels in his thirty-third year; Don Francisco de Mello, a nobleman of highly reputed talents, was the next who obtained this onerous situation. He commenced his governorship by a succession of military operations, and after taking some towns, and defeating the marshal De Guiche in the battle of Honnecourt tarnished all his fame by the great faults which he committed in the famous battle of Rocroi. The duke d'Enghien, then twenty-one years of age, and subsequently so celebrated as the great Condé, completely defeated De Mello; and nearly annihilated the Spanish and Walloon infantry. The military operations of the Dutch army were this year remarkable only by the gallant conduct of Prince William, son of the prince of Orange, who, not yet seventeen years of age, defeated near Hulst, in 1642, under the eyes of his father, a Spanish detachment in a very warm skirmish.

Considerable changes were now insensibly operating in the policy of

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Europe. Cardinal Richelieu had finished his dazzling but tempestuous career of government, in which the hand of death arrested him on the 4th of December, 1642. Louis XIII soon followed to the grave him who was rather his master than his minister. Anne of Austria was declared regent during the minority of her son, Louis XIV, then only five years of age: and Cardinal Mazarin succeeded to the station from which death alone had power to remove his predecessor.

The civil wars in England now broke out, and their terrible results seemed to promise to the republic the undisturbed sovereignty of the seas. The prince of Orange received with great distinction the mother-in-law of his son, when she came to Holland under pretext of conducting her daughter: but her principal purpose was to obtain, by the sale of the crown jewels and the assistance of Frederick Henry, funds for the supply of her unfortunate husband's cause. The prince and several private individuals contributed largely in money; and several experienced officers passed over to serve in the royalist army of England. The provincial states of Holland, however, sympathising wholly with the parliament, remonstrated with the stadholder; and the Dutch colonists encouraged the hostile efforts of their brethren, the Puritans of Scotland, by all the absurd exhortations of fanatic zeal. The province of Holland, and some others, leaned towards the parliament; the prince of Orange favoured the king; and the states-general endeavoured to maintain a neutrality.

The struggle was still furiously maintained in Germany. Everything tended to make peace necessary to some of the contending powers, as it was at length desirable for all. Among other strong motives to that line of conduct, the finances of Holland were in a state perfectly deplorable. Every year brought the necessity of a new loan; and the public debt of the provinces now amounted to 150,000,000 florins, bearing interest at 6½ per cent. Considerable alarm was excited at the progress of the French army in the Belgian provinces; and escape from the tyranny of Spain seemed only to lead to the danger of submission to a nation too powerful and too close at hand not to be dangerous, either as a foe or an ally. These fears were increased by the knowledge that Cardinal Mazarin projected a marriage between Louis XIV and the infanta of Spain, with the Belgian provinces, or Spanish Netherlands as they were now called, for her marriage portion. This project was confided to the prince of Orange, under the seal of secrecy, and he was offered the marquisate of Antwerp as the price of his influence towards effecting the plan. The prince revealed the whole to the states-general. Great fermentation was excited: the stadholder himself was blamed, and suspected of complicity with the designs of the cardinal. Frederick Henry was deeply hurt at this want of confidence, and the injurious publications which openly assailed his honour in a point where he felt himself entitled to praise instead of suspicion.

DEATH OF FREDERICK HENRY; ACCESSION OF WILLIAM II

The French laboured to remove the impression which this affair excited in the republic: but the states-general felt themselves justified by the intriguing policy of Mazarin in entering into a secret negotiation with the king of Spain, who offered very favourable conditions. The negotiations were considerably advanced by the marked disposition evinced by the prince of Orange to hasten the establishment of peace. Yet, at this very period, and while anxiously wishing this great object, he could not resist the desire for another

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campaign; one more exploit, to signalise the epoch at which he finally placed his sword in the scabbard. Frederick Henry was essentially a soldier, with all the spirit of his race; and this evidence of the ruling passion, while he touched the verge of the grave, is one of the most striking points of his character. He accordingly took the field; but, with a constitution broken by a lingering disease, he was little fitted to accomplish any feat worthy of his splendid reputation. He failed in an attempt on Venlo, and another on Antwerp, and retired to the Hague, where for some months he rapidly declined.

On the 14th of March, 1647, he expired, in his sixty-third year; leaving behind him a character of unblemished integrity, prudence, toleration, and valour. He was not of that impetuous stamp which leads men to heroic deeds, and brings danger to the states whose liberty is compromised by their ambition. He was a striking contrast to his brother Maurice, and more resembled his father in many of those calmer qualities of the mind, which make men more beloved without lessening their claims to admiration. Frederick Henry had the honour of completing the glorious task which William began and Maurice followed up. He saw the oppression they had combated now humbled and overthrown; and he forms the third in a sequence of family renown, the most surprising and the least chequered afforded by the annals of Europe.¹



FREDERICK HENRY, PRINCE OF ORANGE

William II succeeded his father in his dignities; and his ardent spirit longed to rival him in war. He turned his endeavours to thwart all the efforts for peace. But the interests of the nation and the dying wishes of Frederick Henry were of too powerful influence with the states to be overcome by the martial yearnings of an inexperienced youth.

TREATIES OF MÜNSTER AND WESTPHALIA

The negotiations were pressed forward; and, despite the complaints, the murmurs and the intrigues of France, the treaty of Münster was finally signed by the respective ambassadors of the United Provinces and Spain, on the 30th of January, 1648. This celebrated treaty contains seventy-nine

[¹ His veneration for his father, whom he resembled in many points of his character, amounted almost to idolatry, a sentiment which he evinced by his adoption of the motto *Patriæque, patriæque*, signifying that his life was devoted to his country, and to vengeance for the murder of his father. Without brilliancy of genius, or extraordinary power of mind, his clear good sense and sound judgment combined with his moderation and integrity to render him one of the best and most esteemed stadholders the provinces ever possessed. By virtue of the Act of Reversion, passed in 1631, his offices devolved immediately on his son William; but the states of Holland and Zealand, desiring to convince the young prince that the stadholdership was their free gift, and not a right he was entitled to claim, allowed the delay of a year to intervene before they confirmed him in the office. — DAVIES.]

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articles. Three points were of main and vital importance to the republic: the first acknowledges an ample and entire recognition of the sovereignty of the states-general, and a renunciation forever of all claims on the part of Spain; the second confirms the rights of trade and navigation in the East and West Indies, with the possession of the various countries and stations then actually occupied by the contracting powers; the third guarantees a like possession of all the provinces and towns of the Netherlands, as they then stood in their respective occupation — a clause highly favourable to



THE CHARLATAN: SEVENTEENTH CENTURY STREET SCENE
(From a painting by Franz von Mieris)

the republic, which had conquered several considerable places in Brabant and Flanders.

The ratifications of the treaty were exchanged at Münster with great solemnity on the 15th of May following the signature; the peace was published in that town and in Osnabrück on the 19th, and in all the different states of the king of Spain and the United Provinces as soon as the joyous intelligence could reach such various and widely separated destinations. Thus, after eighty years' of unparalleled warfare, only interrupted by the truce of 1609, during which hostilities had not ceased in the Indies, the new republic rose from the horrors of civil war and foreign tyranny to its uncon-

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tested rank as a free and independent state among the most powerful nations of Europe. No country had ever done more for glory; and the result of its efforts was the irrevocable guarantee of civil and religious liberty, the great aim and end of civilisation.

The internal tranquillity of the republic was secured from all future alarm by the conclusion of the general Peace of Westphalia, definitely signed the 24th of October, 1648. This treaty was long considered not only as the fundamental law of the empire, but as the basis of the political system of Europe. As numbers of conflicting interests were reconciled, Germanic liberty secured, and a just equilibrium established between the Catholics and Protestants, France and Sweden obtained great advantages; and the various princes of the empire saw their possessions regulated and secured, at the same time that the powers of the emperor were strictly defined.^b

DAVIES' REVIEW OF THE WAR AND THE DUTCH CHARACTER

Thus ended this long and remarkable war, having continued for a period of sixty-eight years, exclusive of the twelve years' truce — a war which, unexampled in the history of nations, had brought commerce, wealth, civilisation, learning, and the arts in its train; and which well deserved its high exemption from the common lot of humanity, because of the nobleness, the purity, and the elevation of the motives from whence it originated; a war which had its foundation in justice, and its termination in glory.¹ Often, in the annals of other nations, examples of bold and successful struggles for liberty against the oppressor and invader have roused the sympathy and inspired the pen of the historian: Athens has had her Marathon, Sparta her Thermopylæ, Switzerland her Morgarten, and Spain her Saragossa; but it was left for Holland alone to present the spectacle of the continuance of such a struggle, against power, wealth, discipline, numbers — in defiance, it seemed, of fate itself for a long series of years: with resolution unwavering, with courage undaunted, with patience unwearied; rejecting, proudly and repeatedly, the solicitations for peace proffered by their mighty foe, and yielding to them at last only when she had, as it were, the destiny of that foe in her hands.

The results of this war, as wonderful as were its commencement and progress, are to be attributed chiefly to the moral qualities of the Dutch; to their maritime power; to the constitution of their government anterior to the revolt; their geographical position; and the rapid increase of their population by the influx of foreigners of all nations. Among the moral qualities which distinguished the Dutch of this period, the most remarkable was honesty — a homely virtue, but none the less real, none the less efficacious in the circumstances in which they were placed. Of the advantage it proved to them in their pecuniary relations with other states, their history affords

[¹ Grotius, indeed, adduces as the sole motive of the war the reluctance of the Dutch to pay the tenth demanded by Alva, but in this instance he does his countrymen a cruel injustice. It was not the mere payment of the tax, but the mode of its levy (without consent of the states), and the fear of its perpetuity, which drove the Hollanders to revolt, as after events most fully proved; and he himself makes the observation, a few pages lower down, "*Omnia dabant, ne decimam darent*" ["they gave all, rather than give a tenth"]; it was because they knew that their forefathers had been accustomed to arrest the arbitrary measures of their sovereigns chiefly by withholding the supplies; because they knew that, if deprived of this power, their only means of redress, except by arms, was gone, and those privileges which they might expect to recover when the government became needy or impoverished would then be lost forever; because they must then afford their tyrant a constant supply of strength to oppress them; in the words of their historian, Bor, "everyone feared an eternal slavery."]

sufficient evidence. At the time when their affairs were most desperate, none ever doubted their national credit; the parsimonious queen of England, the cautious William of Orange, the mistrustful German princes, never hesitated for a moment to advance them loans, or to trust to their honour for the payment of the troops which served under their standards. Carried into their commercial transactions, this probity won them the confidence of the merchants of foreign countries, and caused them to become in course of time the providers and cashiers of nearly the whole civilised world. Permeating their political counsels, it produced a spirit of mutual confidence which bound together all ranks of men in an indissoluble tie. The government, acting in perfect good faith itself, never suspected the fidelity of the people, nor descended to the mean arts of rousing their passions by fictions or misrepresentations; they never deceived them as to their relations with foreign powers, as to the exact condition of their strength and resources, or as to the true nature of the contest in which they were engaged; and the people on their part awarded to the government entire reliance and obedience. Thus a state, formed of the most heterogeneous parts, was united by the strong bond of mutual fidelity into a firm and compact whole, which defied alike the assaults of force from without and the undermining of intrigue from within.

From the effects of this virtue of integrity sprang another, which characterised the Dutch no less strongly — that of firmness. Never led astray by false rumours or false opinions, they contemplated calmly and clearly the object they had in view — security of person and property, and freedom of religion — and employed with undeviating steadiness of purpose the means they conceived calculated to attain it; they desired no more, they would be satisfied with no less; the most flattering promises, the most advantageous offers of peace, which did not realise that object to the full extent, never caused them to waver for a moment; they were exempt from that reckless spirit of innovation, that prurient desire of change, usually remarkable in the actors in great revolutions. The goal which they had determined to reach, therefore, did not change its position from day to day, as whim, ambition, or circumstances dictated; in their deepest reverses, at their highest elevation of prosperity, it was still the same; they pursued their path towards it with slow and measured steps; and when at last they attained it, they suffered no disappointment, they experienced no reaction; they did not, as it too often happens, in the bitterness of a deceived hope, rush back to a condition worse than that they had left; but were content to find what they had sought — freedom and security; and riches, glory, and honour were added to them.

Not the least among the moral causes which led to the national aggrandisement of the Dutch may be found in the singular absence of selfishness and personal vanity observable in all ranks of men. In the great events which occurred during the revolt and subsequent war, and which might easily be supposed to call forth stirring and ambitious spirits, each man performed his part quietly and unostentatiously, without aiming to draw on himself public attention, or to place himself in a prominent light. In other cases it often appears as if the revolution were made for the man; in this, the man was made for the revolution: his individuality was lost, if we may so express it, in his nationality; the Dutchman was less a man than a Dutchman, less a Dutchman than a Hollander or Zealander; himself and his country were identified — her glory was his glory, her wealth his wealth, her greatness his greatness. This sentiment it was which rendered the Dutch so universally

incorruptible that neither during the war nor the truce, though offers and promises were never spared by Spain, do we find a single instance of a traitor of that nature bought with gold.

The reputation of their military officers was little displayed, since the stadholders, as captains-general, being constantly in the field, the credit of all the successes obtained redounded to them; but very rarely do we find their movements embarrassed, or their plans disordered, by want of capacity or promptitude in their inferiors: and the results of their operations bear



DUTCH LANDSCAPE

(From the painting by Ruysdael, 1630)

testimony that they must have been as ably carried out as skilfully combined. Their naval commanders, as their sphere of action was more extensive and independent, so their genius and ability shone out with a more marked and brilliant lustre; Heemskerk, Warmont, Heijn, Matelief, Coen, and Spilbergen are names of which any people may justly be proud. Nor was it only in profound and practical knowledge of matters relating to their profession that these great captains excelled; the admirable treaties made with the native sovereigns of India, and the advantageous terms they obtained for their merchants and factors in foreign countries, proved them no less skilled in the mysteries of political science, and the delicate and intricate subject of the commercial interests of their nation. The merchants also of Holland were as remarkable for enterprise and judgment as for integrity in the management of their commerce; nor less so for the dexterity with which they secured a footing in foreign countries, and the confidence and prudence with which, often in spite of very adverse circumstances, they contrived to retain it.

But though probity, firmness, courage, patriotism, and wisdom might have given the Dutch strength to prolong the contest, and to obtain at the end favourable terms of peace, these qualities might yet scarcely have sufficed to render them independent and powerful, had they not been favoured by

some considerable incidental advantages. Among such may be reckoned, as one of the principal, the excellence of their navy. We have shown that, at the reign of Philip III (II of Spain) the fleets of the Netherlands were able to cope with, if they did not surpass, those of any of the great powers of Europe. These fleets consisted for the most part of armed merchant ships, and of vessels of war belonging, not to the central government but to the municipal governments of the towns by which they were equipped. The breaking out of hostilities, therefore, found the Dutch prepared with a maritime force sufficient to keep the seas against the enemy. The ships merely, which were banished from the ports of England in 1572, were twenty-four in number, at that time a considerable armament; and, in the next year, the fleet of the towns of North Holland was sufficiently powerful to obtain a signal victory over that of Alva, which gave them the possession of the Zuyder Zee.

From the very early period of the war, indeed, when they were to all appearance a mere feeble band of insurgents, they were rarely worsted by the enemy in any naval encounter; and the mastery of the seas which they thus retained enabled them at all times to supply themselves with ammunition, corn, and other provisions, and to transport in safety the subsidies in money and troops afforded them by England; to prevent the conveyance of the armies from Spain by water, forcing them to undergo the tedious and difficult journey overland at an immense waste of men and money; and to hinder the passage of supplies and oblige the enemy to have recourse to themselves, drawing by this means the greater portion of the sums applied to the maintenance of the troops into their own hands. While thus benefiting by the streams that flowed from the treasury of their enemy, they were often able to drain it at its very source, by the capture of the vessels laden with the specie on which her sole dependence was placed; while the provinces themselves, trading in comparative security, collected from all parts of the world the wealth which enabled them to sustain burdens apparently so disproportioned to their strength.

The municipal system of government, which for so many centuries prevailed in the United Provinces, has been remarked upon as tending to disunion, since, attaching its subjects principally to their own town or province, it caused them sometimes to overlook, in their anxiety for its interest, the interest of the whole. But in circumstances where all were bound together by one strong tie, where the same powerful impulse directed the movements of all in unison, it went far towards rendering them invincible. The oppressor found that he had the Hydra to subdue, and that each head was imbued with the strength of the whole body. Every city was, as it were, a fresh nation to conquer.

As another cause of the rapid increase of Holland has justly been adduced, the influx of multitudes of refugees of different nations who sought shelter within her boundaries. Fugitives from the Spanish Netherlands, from Spain itself, Protestants driven from Germany by the miseries of the Thirty Years' War, Jews from Portugal, and Huguenots from France, found here welcome, safety, and employment. Nor was it more in the numbers than in the sort of population she thus gained, that Holland found her advantage. The fugitives were not criminals escaped from justice, speculators lured by the hope of plunder, nor idlers coming thither to enjoy the luxuries which their own country did not afford; they were generally men persecuted on account of their love of civil liberty, or their devotion to their religious tenets; had they been content to sacrifice the one or the other to their present ease and interest

they had remained unmolested where they were; it was by their activity, integrity, and resolution that they rendered themselves obnoxious to the tyrannical and bigoted governments which drove them from their native land; and these virtues they carried with them to their adopted country, peopling it not with vagabonds or indolent voluptuaries, but with brave, intelligent, and useful citizens. Thus, not only was the waste in the population of the provinces consequent on the war rapidly supplied, but by means of the industry and skill of the new-comers their manufactures were carried to so high a pitch of perfection that, in a short time, they were able to surpass and undersell the traders of every other nation.^a

To Thorold Rogers,⁷ the victory of the Dutch means even more than this material prosperity suggests. "I hold," he says, "that the revolt of the Netherlands and the success of Holland is the beginning of modern political science and of modern civilisation. To the true lover of liberty, Holland is the Holy Land of modern Europe, and should be held sacred." These are enthusiastic words, yet perhaps not more enthusiastic than the subject warrants.^a

