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HISTORY OF THE UNITED NETHERLANDS

From the Death of William the Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce--1609

By John Lothrop Motley

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History of the United Netherlands, 1588-1589

CHAPTER XX.

Alexander besieges Bergen-op-Zoom--Pallavicini's Attempt to seduce Parma--Alexander's Fury--He is forced to raise the Siege, of Bergen --Gertruydenberg betrayed to Parma--Indignation of the States-- Exploits, of Schenk--His Attack on Nymegen--He is defeated and drowned--English-Dutch Expedition to Spain--Its meagre Results-- Death of Guise and of the Queen--Mother--Combinations after the Murder of Henry III.--Tandem fit Surculus Arbor.

The fever of the past two years was followed by comparative languor. The deadly crisis was past, the freedom of Europe was saved, Holland and England breathed again; but tension now gave place to exhaustion. The events in the remainder of the year 1588, with those of 1589--although important in themselves--were the immediate results of that history which has been so minutely detailed in these volumes, and can be indicated in a very few pages.

The Duke of Parma, melancholy, disappointed, angry stung to the soul by calumnies as stupid as they were venomous, and already afflicted with a painful and lingering disease, which his friends attributed to poison administered by command of the master whom he had so faithfully served--determined, if possible, to afford the consolation which that master was so plaintively demanding at his hands.

So Alexander led the splendid army which had been packed in, and unpacked from, the flat boats of Newport and Dunkerk, against Bergen-op-Zoom, and besieged that city in form. Once of great commercial importance, although somewhat fallen away from its original prosperity, Bergen was well situate on a little stream which connected it with the tide-waters of the Scheldt, and was the only place in Brabant, except Willemstad, still remaining to the States. Opposite lay the Isle of Tholen from which it was easily to be supplied and reinforced. The Vosmeer, a branch of the Scheldt, separated the island from the main, and there was a path along the bed of that estuary, which, at dead low-water, was practicable

for wading. Alexander, accordingly, sent a party of eight hundred pikemen, under Montigny, Marquis of Renty, and Ottavio Mansfeld, supported on the dyke by three thousand musketeers, across; the dangerous ford, at ebb-tide, in order to seize this important island. It was an adventure similar to those, which, in the days of the grand commander, and under the guidance of Mondragon; had been on two occasions so brilliantly successful. But the Isle of Tholen was now defended by Count Solms and a garrison of fierce amphibious Zeelanders--of those determined bands which had just been holding Farnese and his fleet in prison, and daring him to the issue--and the invading party, after fortunately accomplishing their night journey along the bottom of the Vosmeer, were unable to effect a landing, were driven with considerable loss into the waves again, and compelled to find their way back as best they could, along their dangerous path, and with a rapidly rising tide. It was a blind and desperate venture, and the Vosmeer soon swallowed four hundred of the Spaniards. The rest, half-drowned or smothered, succeeded in reaching the shore--the chiefs of the expedition, Renty and Mansfeld, having been with difficulty rescued by their followers, when nearly sinking in the tide.

The Duke continued the siege, but the place was well defended by an English and Dutch garrison, to the number of five thousand, and commanded by Colonel Morgan, that bold and much experienced Welshman, so well known in the Netherland wars. Willoughby and Maurice of Nassau, and Olden-Barneveld were, at different times, within the walls; for the Duke had been unable to invest the place so closely as to prevent all communications from without; and, while Maurice was present, there were almost daily sorties from the town, with many a spirited skirmish, to give pleasure to the martial young Prince. The English, officers, Vere and Baskerville, and two Netherland colonels, the brothers Bax, most distinguished themselves on these occasions. The siege was not going on with the good fortune which had usually attended the Spanish leaguer. of Dutch cities, while, on the 29th September, a personal incident came to increase Alexander's dissatisfaction and melancholy.

On that day the Duke was sitting in his tent, brooding, as he was apt to do, over the unjust accusations which had been heaped upon him in regard to the failure of the Armada, when a stranger was announced. His name, he said, was Giacomo Morone, and he was the bearer of a letter from Sir Horace Pallavicini, a Genoese gentleman long established in London; and known to be on confidential terms with the English government. Alexander took the letter, and glancing at the bottom of the last page, saw that it was not signed.

"How dare you bring me a dispatch without a signature?" he exclaimed. The messenger, who was himself a Genoese, assured the Duke that the letter was most certainly written by Pallavicini--who had himself placed it, sealed, in his hands--and that he had supposed it signed, although he had of course, not seen the inside.

Alexander began to read the note, which was not a very long one, and his brow instantly darkened. He read a line or two more, when, with an exclamation of fury, he drew his dagger, and, seizing the astonished

Genoese by the throat, was about to strike him dead. Suddenly mastering his rage, however, by a strong effort, and remembering that the man might be a useful witness; he flung Morone from him.

"If I had Pallavicini here," he said, "I would treat, him as I have just refrained from using you. And if I had any suspicion that you were aware of the contents of this letter, I would send you this instant to be hanged."

The unlucky despatch-bearer protested his innocence of all complicity with Pallavicini, and his ignorance of the tenor of the communication by which the Duke's wrath had been so much excited. He was then searched and cross-examined most carefully by Richardot and other counsellors, and his innocence being made apparent-he was ultimately discharged.

The letter of Pallavicini was simply an attempt to sound Farnese as to his sentiments in regard to a secret scheme, which could afterwards be arranged in form, and according, to which he was to assume the sovereignty of the Netherlands himself, to the exclusion of his King, to guarantee to England the possession of the cautionary towns, until her advances to the States should be refunded, and to receive the support and perpetual alliance of the Queen in his new and rebellious position.

Here was additional evidence, if any were wanting, of the universal belief in his disloyalty; and Alexander, faithful, if man ever were to his master--was cut to the heart, and irritated almost to madness, by such insolent propositions. There is neither proof nor probability that the Queen's government was implicated in this intrigue of Pallavicini, who appears to have been inspired by the ambition of achieving a bit of Machiavellian policy, quite on his own account. Nothing came of the proposition, and the Duke; having transmitted to the King a minute narrative of, the affair, together with indignant protestations of the fidelity, which all the world seemed determined to dispute, received most affectionate replies from that monarch, breathing nothing but unbounded confidence in his nephew's innocence and devotion.

Such assurances from any other man in the world might have disarmed suspicion, but Alexander knew his master too well to repose upon his word, and remembered too bitterly the last hours of Don John of Austria --whose dying pillow he had soothed, and whose death had been hastened, as he knew, either by actual poison or by the hardly less fatal venom of slander--to regain tranquillity as to his own position.

The King was desirous that Pallavicini should be invited over to Flanders, in order that Alexander, under pretence of listening to his propositions, might draw from the Genoese all the particulars of his scheme, and then, at leisure, inflict the punishment which he had deserved. But insuperable obstacles presented themselves, nor was Alexander desirous of affording still further pretexts for his slanderers.

Very soon after this incident--most important as showing the real situation of various parties, although without any immediate result--

Alexander received a visit in his tent from another stranger. This time the visitor was an Englishman, one Lieutenant Grimstone, and the object of his interview with the Duke was not political, but had, a direct reference to the siege of Bergen. He was accompanied by a countryman of his own, Redhead by name, a camp-suttler by profession. The two represented themselves as deserters from the besieged city, and offered, for a handsome reward, to conduct a force of Spaniards, by a secret path, into one of the gates. The Duke questioned them narrowly, and being satisfied with their intelligence and coolness, caused them to take an oath on the Evangelists, that they were not playing him false. He then selected a band of one hundred musketeers, partly Spaniards, partly Walloons--to be followed at a distance by a much, more considerable force; two thousand in number, under Sancho de Leyva: and the Marquis of Renti--and appointed the following night for an enterprise against the city, under the guidance of Grimstone.

It was a wild autumnal night, moonless, pitch-dark, with a storm of wind and rain. The waters were out--for the dykes had been cut in all 'directions by the defenders of the city--and, with exception of some elevated points occupied by Parma's forces, the whole country was overflowed. Before the party set forth on their daring expedition, the two Englishmen were tightly bound with cords, and led, each by two soldiers, instructed to put them to instant death if their conduct should give cause for suspicion. But both Grimstone and Redhead preserved a cheerful countenance, and inspired a strong confidence in their honest intention to betray their countrymen. And thus the band of bold adventurers plunged at once into the darkness, and soon found themselves contending with the tempest, and wading breast high in the black waters of the Scheldt.

After a long and perilous struggle, they at length reached the appointed gate, The external portcullis was raised and the fifteen foremost of the band rushed into the town. At the next moment, Lord Willoughby, who had been privy to the whole scheme, cut with his own hand the cords which, held the portcullis, and entrapped the leaders of the expedition, who were all, at once put to the sword, while their followers were thundering at the gate. The lieutenant and sutler who had thus overreached that great master of dissimulation; Alexander Farnese; were at the same time unbound by their comrades, and rescued from the fate intended for them.

Notwithstanding the probability--when the portcullis fell--that the whole party, had been deceived by an artifice of war the adventurers, who had come so far, refused to abandon the enterprise, and continued an impatient battery upon the gate. At last it was swung wide open, and a furious onslaught was made by the garrison upon the Spaniards. There was--a fierce brief struggle, and then the assailants were utterly routed. Some were killed under the walls, while the rest were hunted into the waves. Nearly every one of the, expedition (a thousand in number) perished.

It had now become obvious to the Duke that his siege must be raised. The days were gone when the walls of Dutch towns seemed to melt before the first scornful glance of the Spanish invader; and when a summons

meant a surrender, and a surrender a massacre. Now, strong in the feeling of independence, and supported by the courage and endurance of their English allies, the Hollanders had learned to humble the pride of Spain as it had never been humbled before. The hero of a hundred battle-fields, the inventive and brilliant conqueror of Antwerp, seemed in the deplorable issue of the English invasion to have lost all his genius, all his fortune. A cloud had fallen upon his fame, and he now saw himself; at the head of the best army in Europe, compelled to retire, defeated and humiliated, from the walls of Bergen. Winter was coming on apace; the country was flooded; the storms in that bleak region and inclement season were incessant; and he was obliged to retreat before his army should be drowned.

On the night of 12-13 November he set fire to his camp; and took his departure. By daybreak he was descried in full retreat, and was hotly pursued by the English and Dutch from the city, who drove the great Alexander and his legions before them in ignominious flight. Lord Willoughby, in full view of the retiring enemy, indulged the allied forces with a chivalrous spectacle. Calling a halt, after it had become obviously useless, with their small force of cavalry; to follow any longer, through a flooded country, an enemy who had abandoned his design, he solemnly conferred the honour of knighthood, in the name of Queen Elizabeth, on the officers who had most distinguished themselves during the siege, Francis Vere, Baskerville, Powell, Parker, Knowles, and on the two Netherland brothers, Paul and Marcellus Bax.

The Duke of Parma then went into winter quarters in Brabant, and, before the spring, that obedient Province had been eaten as bare as Flanders had already been by the friendly Spaniards.

An excellent understanding between England and Holland had been the result of their united and splendid exertions against the Invincible Armada. Late in the year 1588 Sir John Norris had been sent by the Queen to offer her congratulations and earnest thanks to the States for their valuable assistance in preserving her throne, and to solicit their cooperation in some new designs against the common foe. Unfortunately, however, the epoch of good feeling was but of brief duration. Bitterness and dissension seemed the inevitable conditions of the English-Dutch alliance. It will be, remembered, that, on the departure of Leicester, several cities had refused to acknowledge the authority of Count Maurice and the States; and that civil war in the scarcely-born commonwealth had been the result. Medenblik, Naarden, and the other contumacious cities, had however been reduced to obedience after the reception of the Earl's resignation, but the important city of Gertruydenberg had remained in a chronic state of mutiny. This rebellion had been partially appeased during the year 1588 by the efforts of Willoughby, who had strengthened, the garrison by reinforcements of English troops under command of his brother-in-law, Sir John Wingfield. Early in 1589 however, the whole garrison became rebellious, disarmed and maltreated the burghers, and demanded immediate payment of the heavy arrearages still due to the troops. Willoughby, who--much disgusted with his career in the Netherlands--was about leaving for England, complaining that the States had not only left him without remuneration for his services, but had not

repaid his own advances, nor even given him a complimentary dinner, tried in vain to pacify them. A rumour became very current, moreover, that the garrison had opened negotiations with Alexander Farnese, and accordingly Maurice of Nassau--of whose patrimonial property the city of Gertruydenberg made a considerable proportion, to the amount of eight thousand pounds sterling a years--after summoning the garrison, in his own name and that of the States, to surrender, laid siege to the place in form. It would have been cheaper, no doubt, to pay the demands of the garrison in full, and allow them to depart. But Maurice considered his honour at stake. His letters of summons, in which he spoke of the rebellious commandant and his garrison as self-seeking foreigners and mercenaries, were taken in very ill part. Wingfield resented the statement in very insolent language, and offered to prove its falsehood with his sword against any man and in any place whatever. Willoughby wrote to his brother-in-law, from Flushing, when about to embark, disapproving of his conduct and of his language; and to Maurice, deprecating hostile measures against a city under the protection of Queen Elizabeth. At any rate, he claimed that Sir John Wingfield and his wife, the Countess of Kent, with their newly-born child, should be allowed to depart from the place. But Wingfield expressed great scorn at any suggestion of retreat, and vowed that he would rather surrender the city to the Spaniards than tolerate the presumption of Maurice and the States. The young Prince accordingly, opened his batteries, but before an entrance could be effected into the town, was obliged to retire at the approach of Count Mansfield with a much superior force. Gertruydenberg was now surrendered to the Spaniards in accordance with a secret negotiation which had been proceeding all the spring, and had been brought to a conclusion at last. The garrison received twelve months' pay in full and a gratuity of five months in addition, and the city was then reduced into obedience to Spain and Rome on the terms which had been usual during the government of Farnese.

The loss of this city was most severe to the republic, for the enemy had thus gained an entrance into the very heart of Holland. It was a more important acquisition to Alexander than even Bergen-op-Zoom would have been, and it was a bitter reflection that to the treachery of Netherlanders and of their English allies this great disaster was owing. All the wrath aroused a year before by the famous treason of York and Stanley, and which had been successfully extinguished, now flamed forth afresh. The States published a placard denouncing the men who had thus betrayed the cause of freedom, and surrendered the city of Gertruydenberg to the Spaniards, as perjured traitors whom it was made lawful to hang, whenever or wherever caught, without trial or sentence, and offering fifty florins a-head for every private soldier and one hundred florins for any officer of the garrison. A list of these Englishmen and Netherlanders, so far as known, was appended to the placard, and the catalogue was headed by the name of Sir John Wingfield.

Thus the consequences of the fatal event were even more deplorable than the loss of the city itself. The fury of Olden-Barneveld at the treason was excessive, and the great Advocate governed the policy of the republic, at this period, almost like a dictator. The States, easily acknowledging the sway of the imperious orator, became bitter--and

wrathful with the English, side by side with whom they had lately been so cordially standing.

Willoughby, on his part, now at the English court, was furious with the States, and persuaded the leading counsellors of the Queen as well as her Majesty herself, to adopt his view of the transaction. Wingfield, it was asserted, was quite innocent in the matter; he was entirely ignorant of the French language, and therefore was unable to read a word of the letters addressed to him by Maurice and the replies which had been signed by himself. Whether this strange excuse ought to be accepted or not, it is quite certain that he was no traitor like York and Stanley, and no friend to Spain; for he had stipulated for himself the right to return to England, and had neither received nor desired any reward. He hated Maurice and he hated the States, but he asserted that he had been held in durance, that the garrison was mutinous, and that he was no more responsible for the loss of the city than Sir Francis Vere had been, who had also been present, and whose name had been subsequently withdrawn, in honourable fashion from the list of traitors, by authority of the States. His position--so far as he was personally concerned--seemed defensible, and the Queen was thoroughly convinced of his innocence. Willoughby complained that the republic was utterly in the hands of Barneveld, that no man ventured to lift his voice or his eyes in presence of the terrible Advocate who ruled every Netherlander with a rod of iron, and that his violent and threatening language to Wingfield and himself at the dinner-table in Bergen-op-Zoom on the subject of the mutiny (when one hundred of the Gertruydenberg garrison were within sound of his voice) had been the chief cause of the rebellion. Inspired by these remonstrances, the Queen once more emptied the vials of her wrath upon the United Netherlands. The criminations and recriminations seemed endless, and it was most fortunate that Spain had been weakened, that Alexander, a prey to melancholy and to lingering disease, had gone to the baths of Spa to recruit his shattered health, and that his attention and the schemes of Philip for the year 1589 and the following period were to be directed towards France. Otherwise the commonwealth could hardly have escaped still more severe disasters than those already experienced in this unfortunate condition of its affairs, and this almost hopeless misunderstanding with its most important and vigorous friend.

While these events had been occurring in the heart of the republic, Martin Schenk, that restless freebooter, had been pursuing a bustling and most lucrative career on its outskirts. All the episcopate of Cologne--that debatable land of the two rival paupers, Bavarian Ernest and Gebhard Truchsess--trembled before him. Mothers scared their children into quiet with the terrible name of Schenk, and farmers and land-youngers throughout the electorate and the land of Berg, Cleves, and Juliers, paid their black-mail, as if it were a constitutional impost, to escape the levying process of the redoubtable partisan.

But Martin was no longer seconded, as he should have been, by the States, to whom he had been ever faithful since he forsook the banner of Spain for their own; and he had even gone to England and complained to the Queen of the short-comings of those who owed him so much. His ingenious and daring exploit--the capture of Bonn--has already been narrated, but

the States had neglected the proper precautions to secure that important city. It had consequently, after a six months' siege, been surrendered to the Spaniards under Prince Chimay, on the 19th of September; while, in December following, the city of Wachtendonk, between the Rhine and Meuse, had fallen into Mansfeld's hands. Rheinberg, the only city of the episcopate which remained to the deposed Truchsess, was soon afterwards invested by the troops of Parma, and Schenk in vain summoned the States-General to take proper measures for its defence. But with the enemy now eating his way towards the heart of Holland, and with so many dangers threatening them on every side, it was thought imprudent to go so far away to seek the enemy. So Gebhard retired in despair into Germany, and Martin did what he could to protect Rheinberg, and to fill his own coffers at the expense of the whole country side.

He had built a fort, which then and long afterwards bore his name--Schenken Schans, or Schenk's Sconce--at that important point where the Rhine, opening its two arms to enclose the "good meadow" island of Batavia, becomes on the left the Waal, while on the right it retains its ancient name; and here, on the outermost edge of the republic, and looking straight from his fastness into the fruitful fields of Munster, Westphalia, and the electorate, the industrious Martin devoted himself with advantage to his favourite pursuits.

On the 7th of August, on the heath of Lippe, he had attacked a body of Spanish musketeers, more than a thousand strong, who were protecting a convoy of provisions, treasure, and furniture, sent by Farnese to Verdugo, royal governor of Friesland. Schenk, without the loss of a single man, had put the greater part of these Spaniards and Walloons to the sword, and routed the rest. The leader of the expedition, Colonel Aristotle Patton, who had once played him so foul a trick in the surrender of Gelder, had soon taken to flight, when he found his ancient enemy upon him, and, dashing into the Lippe, had succeeded, by the strength and speed of his horse, in gaining the opposite bank, and effecting his escape. Had he waited many minutes longer it is probable that the treacherous Aristotle would have passed a comfortless half-hour with his former comrade. Treasure to the amount of seven thousand crowns in gold, five hundred horses, with jewels, plate, and other articles of value, were the fruit of this adventure, and Schenk returned with his followers, highly delighted, to Schenkenschans, and sent the captured Spanish colours to her Majesty of England as a token.

A few miles below his fortress was Nymegen, and towards that ancient and wealthy city Schenk had often cast longing eyes. It still held for the King, although on the very confines of Batavia; but while acknowledging the supremacy of Philip, it claimed the privileges of the empire. From earliest times it had held its head very high among imperial towns, had been one of the three chief residences of the Emperor. Charlemagne, and still paid the annual tribute of a glove full of pepper to the German empire.

On the evening of the 10th of August, 1589, there was a wedding feast in one of the splendid mansions of the stately city. The festivities were prolonged until deep in the midsummer's night, and harp and viol were

still inspiring the feet of the dancers, when on a sudden, in the midst of the holiday-groups, appeared the grim visage of Martin Schenk, the man who never smiled. Clad in no wedding-garment, but in armour of proof, with morion on head, and sword in hand, the great freebooter strode heavily through the ball-room, followed by a party of those terrible musketeers who never gave or asked for quarter, while the affrighted revellers fluttered away before them.

Taking advantage of a dark night, he had just dropped down the river from his castle, with five-and-twenty barges, had landed with his most trusted soldiers in the foremost vessels, had battered down the gate of St. Anthony, and surprised and slain the guard. Without waiting for the rest of his boats, he had then stolen with his comrades through the silent streets, and torn away the lattice-work, and other slight defences on the rear of the house which they had now entered, and through which they intended to possess themselves of the market-place. Martin had long since selected this mansion as a proper position for his enterprise, but he had not been bidden to the wedding, and was somewhat disconcerted when he found himself on the festive scene which he had so grimly interrupted. Some of the merry-makers escaped from the house, and proceeded to alarm the town; while Schenk hastily fortified his position; and took possession of the square. But the burghers and garrison were soon on foot, and he was driven back into the house. Three times he recovered the square by main strength of his own arm, seconded by the handful of men whom he had brought with him, and three times he was beaten back by overwhelming numbers into the wedding mansion. The arrival of the greater part of his followers, with whose assistance he could easily have mastered the city in the first moments of surprise, was mysteriously delayed. He could not account for their prolonged, absence, and was meanwhile supported only by those who had arrived with him in the foremost barges.

The truth--of which he was ignorant--was, that the remainder of the flotilla, borne along by the strong and deep current of the Waal, then in a state of freshet, had shot past the landing-place, and had ever since been vainly struggling against wind and tide to force their way back to the necessary point. Meantime Schenk and his followers fought desperately in the market-place, and desperately in the house which he had seized. But a whole garrison, and a town full of citizens in arms proved too much for him, and he was now hotly besieged in the mansion, and at last driven forth into the streets.

By this time day was dawning, the whole population, soldiers and burghers, men, women, and children, were thronging about the little band of marauders, and assailing them with every weapon and every missile to be found. Schenk fought with his usual ferocity, but at last the musketeers, in spite of his indignant commands, began rapidly to retreat towards the quay. In vain Martin stormed and cursed, in vain with his own hand he struck more than one of his soldiers dead. He was swept along with the panic-stricken band, and when, shouting and gnashing his teeth with frenzy, he reached the quay at last, he saw at a glance why his great enterprise had failed. The few empty barges of his own party were moored at the steps; the rest were half a mile off, contending

hopelessly against the swollen and rapid Waal. Schenk, desperately wounded, was left almost alone upon the wharf, for his routed followers had plunged helter skelter into the boats, several of which, overladen in the panic, sank at once, leaving the soldiers to drown or struggle with the waves. The game was lost. Nothing was left the freebooter but retreat. Reluctantly turning his back on his enemies, now in full cry close behind him, Schenk sprang into the last remaining boat just pushing from the quay. Already overladen, it foundered with his additional weight, and Martin Schenk, encumbered with his heavy armour, sank at once to the bottom of the Waal.

Some of the fugitives succeeded in swimming down the stream, and were picked up by their comrades in the barges below the town, and so made their escape. Many were drowned with their captain. A few days afterwards, the inhabitants of Nymegen fished up the body of the famous partisan. He was easily recognized by his armour, and by his truculent face, still wearing the scowl with which he had last rebuked his followers. His head was taken off at once, and placed on one of the turrets of the town, and his body, divided in four, was made to adorn other portions of the battlements; so that the burghers were enabled to feast their eyes on the remnants of the man at whose name the whole country had so often trembled.

This was the end of Sir Martin Schenk of Niddegem, knight, colonel, and brigand; save that ultimately his dissevered limbs were packed in a chest, and kept in a church tower, until Maurice of Nassau, in course of time becoming master of Nymegen, honoured the valiant and on the whole faithful freebooter with a Christian and military burial.

A few months later (October, 1589) another man who had been playing an important part in the Netherlands' drama lost his life. Count Moeurs and Niewenaar, stadholder of Utrecht, Gelderland, and Overysael, while inspecting some newly-invented fireworks, was suddenly killed by their accidental ignition and explosion. His death left vacant three great stadholderates, which before long were to be conferred upon a youth whose power henceforth was rapidly to grow greater.

The misunderstanding between Holland and England continuing, Olden-Barneveld, Aerssens, and Buys, refusing to see that they had done wrong in denouncing the Dutch and English traitors who had sold Gertruydenberg to the enemy, and the Queen and her counsellors persisting in their anger at so insolent a proceeding, it may easily be supposed that there was no great heartiness in the joint expedition against Spain, which had been projected in the autumn of 1588, and was accomplished in the spring and summer of 1589.

Nor was this well-known enterprise fruitful of any remarkable result. It had been decided to carry the war into Spain itself, and Don Antonio, prior of Crato, bastard of Portugal, and pretender to its crown, had persuaded himself and the English government that his name would be potent to conjure with in that kingdom, hardly yet content with the Spanish yoke. Supported by a determined force of English and Dutch adventurers, he boasted that he should excite a revolution by the magic

of his presence, and cause Philip's throne to tremble, in return for the audacious enterprise of that monarch against England.

If a foray were to be made into Spain, no general and no admiral could be found in the world so competent to the adventure as Sir John Norris and Sir Francis Drake. They were accompanied, too, by Sir Edward Norris, and another of those 'chickens of Mars,' Henry Norris; by the indomitable and ubiquitous Welshman, Roger Williams, and by the young Earl of Essex, whom the Queen in vain commanded to remain at home, and who, somewhat to the annoyance of the leaders of the expedition, concealed himself from her Majesty's pursuit, and at last embarked in a vessel which he had equipped, in order not to be cheated of his share in the hazard and the booty. "If I speed well," said the spendthrift but valiant youth; "I will adventure to be rich; if not, I will never live, to see the end of my poverty."

But no great riches were to be gathered in the expedition. With some fourteen thousand men, and one hundred and sixty vessels--of which six were the Queen's ships of war, including the famous Revenge and the Dreadnought, and the rest armed merchantmen, English, and forty Hollanders--and with a contingent of fifteen hundred Dutchmen under Nicolas van Meetkerke and Van Laen, the adventurers set sail from Plymouth on the 18th of April, 1589.

They landed at Coruna--at which place they certainly could not expect to create a Portuguese revolution, which was the first object of the expedition--destroyed some shipping in the harbour, captured and sacked the lower town, and were repulsed in the upper; marched with six thousand men to Burgos, crossed the bridge at push of pike, and routed ten thousand Spaniards under Andrada and Altamira--Edward Norris receiving a desperate blow on the head at the passage' of the bridge, and being rescued from death by his brother John--took sail for the south after this action, in which they had killed a thousand Spaniards, and had lost but two men of their own; were joined off Cape Finisterre by Essex; landed a force at Peniche, the castle of which place surrendered to them, and acknowledged the authority of Don Antonio; and thence marched with the main body of the troops, under Sir John Norris, forty-eight miles to Lisbon, while Drake, with the fleet, was to sail up the Tagus.

Nothing like a revolution had been effected in Portugal. No one seemed to care for the Pretender, or even to be aware that he had ever existed, except the governor of Peniche Castle, a few ragged and bare-footed peasants, who, once upon the road, shouted "Viva Don Antonio," and one old gentleman by the way side, who brought him a plate of plums. His hopes of a crown faded rapidly, and when the army reached Lisbon it had dwindled to not much more than four thousand effective men--the rest being dead of dysentery, or on the sick-list from imprudence in eating and drinking--while they found that they had made an unfortunate omission in their machinery for assailing the capital, having not a single fieldpiece in the whole army. Moreover, as Drake was prevented by bad weather and head-winds from sailing up the Tagus, it seemed a difficult matter to carry the city. A few cannon, and the co-operation of the fleet, were hardly to be dispensed with on such an occasion.

Nevertheless it would perhaps have proved an easier task than it appeared--for so great was the panic within the place that a large number of the inhabitants had fled, the Cardinal Viceroy Archduke Albert had but a very insufficient guard, and there were many gentlemen of high station who were anxious to further the entrance of the English, and who were afterwards hanged or garotted for their hostile sentiments to the Spanish government.

While the leaders were deliberating what course to take, they were informed that Count Fuentes and Henriquez de Guzman, with six thousand men, lay at a distance of two miles from Lisbon, and that they had been proclaiming by sound of trumpet that the English had been signally defeated before Lisbon, and that they were in full retreat.

Fired at this bravado, Norris sent a trumpet to Fuentes and Guzman, with a letter signed and sealed, giving them the lie in plainest terms, appointing the next day for a meeting of the two forces, and assuring them that when the next encounter should take place, it should be seen whether a Spaniard or an Englishman would be first to fly; while Essex, on his part, sent a note, defying either or both those boastful generals to single combat. Next day the English army took the field, but the Spaniards retired before them; and nothing came of this exchange of cartels, save a threat on the part of Fuentes to hang the trumpeter who had brought the messages. From the execution of this menace he refrained, however, on being assured that the deed would be avenged by the death of the Spanish prisoner of highest rank then in English hands, and thus the trumpeter escaped.

Soon afterwards the fleet set sail from the Tagus, landed, and burned Vigo on their way homeward, and returned to Plymouth about the middle of July.

Of the thirteen thousand came home six thousand, the rest having perished of dysentery and other disorders. They had braved and insulted Spain, humbled her generals, defied her power, burned some defenceless villages, frightened the peasantry, set fire to some shipping, destroyed wine, oil, and other merchandize, and had divided among the survivors of the expedition, after landing in England, five shillings a head prize-money; but they had not effected a revolution in Portugal. Don Antonio had been offered nothing by his faithful subjects but a dish of plums--so that he retired into obscurity from that time forward--and all this was scarcely a magnificent result for the death of six or seven thousand good English and Dutch soldiers, and the outlay of considerable treasure.

As a free-booting foray--and it was nothing else--it could hardly be thought successful; although it was a splendid triumph compared with the result of the long and loudly heralded Invincible Armada.

In France, great events during the remainder of 1588 and the following year, and which are well known even to the most superficial student of history, had much changed the aspect of European affairs. It was fortunate for the two commonwealths of Holland and England, engaged in the great struggle for civil and religious liberty, and national

independence, that the attention of Philip became more and more absorbed--as time wore on--with the affairs of France. It seemed necessary for him firmly to establish his dominion in that country before attempting once more the conquest of England, or the recovery of the Netherlands. For France had been brought more nearly to anarchy and utter decomposition than ever. Henry III., after his fatal forgiveness of the deadly offence of Guise, felt day by day more keenly that he had transferred his sceptre--such as it was--to that dangerous intriguer. Bitterly did the King regret having refused the prompt offer of Alphonse Corse on the day of the barricades; for now, so long as the new generalissimo should live, the luckless Henry felt himself a superfluity in his own realm. The halcyon days were for ever past, when, protected by the swords of Joyeuse and of Epernon, the monarch of France could pass his life playing at cup and ball, or snipping images out of pasteboard, or teaching his parrots--to talk, or his lap-dogs to dance. His royal occupations were gone, and murder now became a necessary preliminary to any future tranquillity or enjoyment. Discrowned as he felt himself already, he knew that life or liberty was only held by him now at the will of Guise. The assassination of the Duke in December was the necessary result of the barricades in May; and accordingly that assassination was arranged with an artistic precision of which the world had hardly suspected the Valois to be capable, and which Philip himself might have envied.

The story of the murders of Blois--the destruction of Guise and his brother the Cardinal, and the subsequent imprisonment of the Archbishop of Lyons, the Cardinal Bourbon, and the Prince de Joinville, now, through the death of his father, become the young Duke of Guise--all these events are too familiar in the realms of history, song, romance, and painting, to require more than this slight allusion here.

Never had an assassination been more technically successful; yet its results were not commensurate with the monarch's hopes. The deed which he had thought premature in May was already too late in December. His mother denounced his cruelty now, as she had, six months before, execrated his cowardice. And the old Queen, seeing that her game was played out--that the cards had all gone against her--that her son was doomed, and her own influence dissolved in air, felt that there was nothing left for her but to die. In a week she was dead, and men spoke no more of Catharine de' Medici, and thought no more of her than if--in the words of a splenetic contemporary--"she had been a dead she-goat." Paris howled with rage when it learned the murders of Blois, and the sixteen quarters became more furious than ever against the Valois. Some wild talk there was of democracy and republicanism after the manner of Switzerland, and of dividing France into cantons--and there was an earnest desire on the part of every grandee, every general, every soldier of fortune, to carve out a portion of French territory with his sword, and to appropriate it for himself and his heirs. Disintegration was making rapid progress, and the epoch of the last Valois seemed more dark and barbarous than the times of the degenerate Carolingians had been. The letter-writer of the Escorial, who had earnestly warned his faithful Mucio, week after week, that dangers were impending over him, and that "some trick would be played upon him," should he venture into the royal presence, now acquiesced in his assassination, and placidly busied

himself with fresh combinations and newer tools.

Baked, hunted, scorned by all beside, the luckless Henry now threw himself into the arms of the Bearnese--the man who could and would have protected him long before, had the King been capable of understanding their relative positions and his own true interests. Could the Valois have conceived the thought of religious toleration, his throne even then might have been safe. But he preferred playing the game of the priests and bigots, who execrated his name and were bent upon his destruction. At last, at Plessis les Tours, the Bearnese, in his shabby old chamois jacket and his well-dinted cuirass took the silken Henry in his arms, and the two--the hero and the fribble--swearing eternal friendship, proceeded to besiege Paris. A few weeks later, the dagger of Jacques Clement put an end for ever to, the line of Valois. Luckless Henry III. slept with his forefathers, and Henry of Bourbon and Navarre proclaimed himself King of France. Catharine and her four sons had all past away at last, and it would be a daring and a dexterous schemer who should now tear the crown, for which he had so long and so patiently waited, from the iron grasp of the Bearnese. Philip had a more difficult game than ever to play in France. It would be hard for him to make valid the claims of the Infanta and any husband he might select for her to the crown of her grandfather Henry II. It seemed simple enough for him, while waiting the course of events, to set up a royal effigy before the world in the shape of an effete old Cardinal Bourbon, to pour oil upon its head and to baptize it Charles X.; but meantime the other Bourbon was no effigy, and he called himself Henry IV.

It was easy enough for Paris, and Madam League, and Philip the Prudent, to cry wo upon the heretic; but the cheerful leader of the Huguenots was a philosopher, who in the days of St. Bartholomew had become orthodox to save his life, and who was already "instructing himself" anew in order to secure his crown. Philip was used to deal with fanatics, and had often been opposed by a religious bigotry as fierce as his own; but he might perhaps be baffled by a good-humoured free-thinker, who was to teach him a lesson in political theology of which he had never dreamed.

The Leaguers were not long in doubt as to the meaning of "instruction," and they were thoroughly persuaded that--so soon as Henry IV. should reconcile himself with Rome--their game was likely to become desperate.

Nevertheless prudent Philip sat in his elbow-chairs writing his apostilles, improving himself and his secretaries in orthography, but chiefly confining his attention to the affairs of France. The departed Mucio's brother Mayenne was installed as chief stipendiary of Spain and lieutenant-general for the League in France, until Philip should determine within himself in what form to assume the sovereignty of that kingdom. It might be questionable however whether that corpulent Duke, who spent more time in eating than Henry IV. did in sleeping, and was longer in reading a letter than Henry in winning a battle, were likely to prove a very dangerous rival even with all Spain at his back--to the lively Bearnese. But time would necessarily be consumed before the end was reached, and time and Philip were two. Henry of Navarre and France was ready to open his ears to instruction; but even he had declared,

several years before, that "a religion was not to be changed like a shirt." So while the fresh garment was airing for him at Rome, and while he was leisurely stripping off the old, he might perhaps be taken at a disadvantage. Fanaticism on both sides, during this process of instruction, might be roused. The Huguenots on their part might denounce the treason of their great chief, and the Papists, on theirs, howl at the hypocrisy of the pretended conversion. But Henry IV. had philosophically prepared himself for the denunciations of the Protestants, while determined to protect them against the persecutions of the Romanism to which he meant to give his adhesion. While accepting the title of renegade, together with an undisputed crown, he was not the man to rekindle those fires of religious bigotry which it was his task to quench, now that they had lighted his way to the throne. The demands of his Catholic supporters for the exclusion from the kingdom of all religions but their own, were steadily refused.

And thus the events of 1588 and 1589 indicated that the great game of despotism against freedom would be played, in the coming years, upon the soil of France. Already Elizabeth had furnished the new King with £22,000 in gold--a larger sum; as he observed, than he had ever seen before in his life, and the States of the Netherlands had provided him with as much more. Willoughby too, and tough Roger Williams, and Baskerville, and Umpton, and Vere, with 4000 English pikemen at their back, had already made a brief but spirited campaign in France; and the Duke of Parma, after recruiting his health; so, far as it was possible; at Spa, was preparing himself to measure swords with that great captain of Huguenots; who now assumed the crown of his ancestors, upon the same ground. It seemed probable that for the coming years England would be safe from Spanish invasion, and that Holland would have a better opportunity than it had ever enjoyed before of securing its liberty and perfecting its political organization. While Parma, Philip; and Mayenne were fighting the Bearnese for the crown of France, there might be a fairer field for the new commonwealth of the United Netherlands.

And thus many of the personages who have figured in these volumes have already passed away. Leicester had died just after the defeat of the Armada, and the thrifty Queen, while dropping a tear upon the grave of 'sweet Robin,' had sold his goods at auction to defray his debts to herself; and Moeurs, and Martin Schenk, and 'Mucio,' and Henry III., and Catharine de' Medici, were all dead. But Philip the Prudent remained, and Elizabeth of England, and Henry of France and Navarre, and John of Olden-Barneveld; and there was still another personage, a very young man still, but a deep-thinking, hard-working student, fagging steadily at mathematics and deep in the works of Stevinus, who, before long, might play a conspicuous part in the world's great drama. But, previously to 1590, Maurice of Nassau seemed comparatively insignificant, and he could be spoken of by courtiers as a cipher, and as an unmannerly boy just let loose from school.

I will never live, to see the end of my poverty
Religion was not to be changed like a shirt
Tension now gave place to exhaustion

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