

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle Willis
Baum Henry Nietzsche Dumas Flaubert Turgenev Balzac
Leslie Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato
Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Harte
Kant London Descartes Cervantes Burton Hesse
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Irving
Bunner Richter Chekhov Chambers Alcott
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**History of the United Netherlands
from the Death of William the
Silent to the Twelve Year's Truce,
1584-85a**

John Lothrop Motley

Imprint

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CHAPTER III.

Policy of England—Schemes of the Pretender of Portugal—
Hesitation
of the French Court—Secret Wishes of France—Contradictory
Views as
to the Opinions of Netherlanders—Their Love for England and
Elizabeth—Prominent Statesmen of the Provinces—Roger Wil-
liams the
Welshman Views of Walsingham, Burghley, and the Queen—An
Embassy to
Holland decided upon—Davison at the Hague—Cautious and
Secret
Measures of Burghley—Consequent Dissatisfaction of Walsing-
ham—
English and Dutch Suspicion of France—Increasing Affection of
Holland for England.

The policy of England towards the Provinces had been somewhat hesitating, but it had not been disloyal. It was almost inevitable that there should be timidity in the councils of Elizabeth, when so grave a question as that of confronting the vast power of Spain was forcing itself day by day more distinctly upon the consideration of herself and her statesmen. It was very clear, now that Orange was dead, that some new and decided step would be taken. Elizabeth was in favour of combined action by the French and English governments, in behalf of the Netherlands—a joint protectorate of the Provinces, until such time as adequate concessions on the religious question could be obtained from Spain. She was unwilling to plunge into the peril and expense of a war with the strongest power in the world. She disliked the necessity under which she should be placed of making repeated applications to her parliament, and of thus fostering the political importance of the Commons; she was reluctant to encourage rebellious subjects in another land, however just the cause of their revolt. She felt herself vulnerable in Ireland and on the Scottish border. Nevertheless, the Spanish power was becoming so preponderant, that if the Netherlands were conquered,

she could never feel a moment's security within her own territory. If the Provinces were annexed to France, on the other hand, she could not contemplate with complacency the increased power thus placed in the hands of the treacherous and jesuitical house of Valois.

The path of the Queen was thickly strewn with peril: her advisers were shrewd, far-seeing, patriotic, but some of them were perhaps over cautious. The time had, however, arrived when the danger was to be faced, if the whole balance of power in Europe were not to come to an end, and weak states, like England and the Netherlands, to submit to the tyranny of an overwhelming absolutism. The instinct of the English sovereign, of English statesmen, of the English nation, taught them that the cause of the Netherlands was their own. Nevertheless, they were inclined to look on yet a little longer, although the part of spectator had become an impossible one. The policy of the English government was not treacherous, although it was timid. That of the French court was both the one and the other, and it would have been better both for England and the Provinces, had they more justly appreciated the character of Catharine de' Medici and her son.

The first covert negotiations between Henry and the States had caused much anxiety among the foreign envoys in France. Don Bernardino de Mendoza, who had recently returned from Spain after his compulsory retreat from his post of English ambassador, was now established in Paris, as representative of Philip. He succeeded Tasais—a Netherlander by birth, and one of the ablest diplomatists in the Spanish service—and his house soon became the focus of intrigue against the government to which he was accredited—the very head-quarters of the League. His salary was large, his way of living magnificent, his insolence intolerable.

"Tassis is gone to the Netherlands," wrote envoy Busbecq to the Emperor, "and thence is to proceed to Spain. Don Bernardino has arrived in his place. If it be the duty of a good ambassador to expend largely, it would be difficult to find a better one than he; for they say 'tis his intention to spend sixteen thousand dollars yearly in his embassy. I would that all things were in correspondence; and that he were not in other respects so inferior to Tassis."

It is, however, very certain that Mendoza was not only a brave soldier, but a man of very considerable capacity in civil affairs, although his inordinate arrogance interfered most seriously with his skill as a negotiator. He was, of course, watching with much fierceness the progress of these underhand proceedings between the French court and the rebellious subjects of his master, and using threats and expostulations in great profusion. "Mucio," too, the great stipendiary of Philip, was becoming daily more dangerous, and the adherents of the League were multiplying with great celerity.

The pretender of Portugal, Don Antonio, prior of Crato, was also in Paris; and it was the policy of both the French and the English governments to protect his person, and to make use of him as a rod over the head of Philip. Having escaped, after the most severe sufferings, in the mountains of Spain, where he had been tracked like a wild beast, with a price of thirty thousand crowns placed upon his head, he was now most anxious to stir the governments of Europe into espousing his cause, and into attacking Spain through the recently acquired kingdom of Portugal. Meantime, he was very desirous of some active employment, to keep himself from starving, and conceived the notion, that it would be an excellent thing for the Netherlands and himself, were he to make good to them the loss of William the Silent.

"Don Antonio," wrote Stafford, "made a motion to me yesterday, to move her Majesty, that now upon the Prince of Orange's death, as it is a necessary thing for them to have a governor and head, and him to be at her Majesty's devotion, if her Majesty would be at the means to work it for him, she should be assured nobody should be more faithfully tied in devotion to her than he. Truly you would pity the poor man's case, who is almost next door to starving in effect."

A starving condition being, however, not the only requisite in a governor and head to replace the Prince of Orange, nothing came of this motion. Don Antonio remained in Paris, in a pitiable plight, and very much environed by dangers; for the Duke of Guise and his brother had undertaken to deliver him into the hands of Philip the Second, or those of his ministers, before the feast of St. John of the

coming year. Fifty thousand dollars were to be the reward of this piece of work, combined with other services; "and the sooner they set about it the better," said Philip, writing a few months later, "for the longer they delay it, the less easy will they find it."

The money was never earned, however, and meantime Don Antonio made himself as useful as he could, in picking up information for Sir Edward Stafford and the other opponents of Spanish policy in Paris.

The English envoy was much embarrassed by the position of affairs. He felt sure that the French monarch would never dare to enter the lists against the king of Spain, yet he was accurately informed of the secret negotiations with the Netherlands, while in the dark as to the ultimate intentions of his own government.

"I was never set to school so much," he wrote to Walsingham (27th July, 1584), "as I have been to decipher the cause of the deputies of the Low Countries coming hither, the offers that they made the King here, and the King's manner of dealing with them!"

He expressed great jealousy at the mystery which enveloped the whole transaction; and much annoyance with Noel de Caron, who "kept very secret, and was angry at the motion," when he endeavoured to discover the business in which they were engaged. Yet he had the magnanimity to request Walsingham not to mention the fact to the Queen, lest she should be thereby prejudiced against the States.

"For my part," said he, "I would be glad in any thing to further them, rather than to hinder them—though they do not deserve it—yet for the good the helping them at this time may bring ourselves."

Meantime, the deputies went away from France, and the King went to Lyons, where he had hoped to meet both the Duke of Savoy and the King of Navarre. But Joyeuse, who had been received at Chambery with "great triumphs and tourneys," brought back only a broken wrist, without bringing the Duke of Savoy; that potentate

sending word that the "King of Spain had done him the honour to give him his daughter, and that it was not fit for him to do any thing that might bring jealousy."

Henry of Navarre also, as we have seen, declined the invitation sent him, M. de Segur not feeling disposed for the sudden flight out of window suggested by Agrippa D' Aubigne; so that, on the whole, the King and his mother, with all the court, returned from Lyons in marvellous ill humour.

"The King storms greatly," said Stafford, "and is in a great dump." It was less practicable than ever to discover the intentions of the government; for although it was now very certain that active exertions were making by Des Pruneaux in the Provinces, it was not believed by the most sagacious that a serious resolution against Spain had been taken in France. There was even a talk of a double matrimonial alliance, at that very moment, between the two courts.

"It is for certain here said," wrote Stafford, "that the King of Spain doth presently marry the dowager of France, and 'tis thought that if the King of Spain marry, he will not live a year. Whensoever the marriage be," added the envoy, "I would to God the effect were true, for if it be not by some such handy work of God, I am afraid things will not go so well as I could wish."

There was a lull on the surface of affairs, and it was not easy to sound the depths of unseen combinations and intrigues.

There was also considerable delay in the appointment and the arrival of the new deputies from the Netherlands; and Stafford was as doubtful as ever as to the intentions of his own government.

"They look daily here for the States," he wrote to Walsingham (29th Dec. 1584), "and I pray that I may hear from you as soon as you may, what course I shall take when they be here, either hot or cold or lukewarm in the matter, and in what sort I shall behave myself. Some badly affected have gone about to put into the King's head, that they never meant to offer the sovereignty, which, though the King be not thoroughly persuaded of, yet so much is won by this means that the King hearkeneth to see the end, and then to believe as he seeth cause, and in the meantime to speak no more of any such matter than if it had never been moved."

While his Majesty was thus hearkening in order to see more, according to Sir Edward's somewhat Hibernian mode of expressing himself, and keeping silent that he might see the better, it was more difficult than ever for the envoy to know what course to pursue. Some persons went so far as to suggest that the whole negotiation was a mere phantasmagoria devised by Queen Elizabeth—her purpose being to breed a quarrel between Henry and Philip for her own benefit; and "then, seeing them together by the ears, as her accustomed manner was, to let them go alone, and sit still to look on."

The King did not appear to be much affected by these insinuations against Elizabeth; but the doubt and the delay were very harassing. "I would to God," wrote the English envoy, "that if the States mean to do anything here with the King, and if her Majesty and the council think it fit, they would delay no time, but go roundly either to an agreement or to a breach with the King. Otherwise, as the matter now sleepeth, so it will die, for the King must be taken in his humour when he begins to nibble at any bait, for else he will come away, and never bite a full bite while he liveth."

There is no doubt that the bait, at which Henry nibbled with much avidity, was the maritime part of the Netherlands. Holland and Zeeland in the possession of either England or Spain, was a perpetual inconvenience to France. The King, or rather the Queen-Mother and her advisers—for Henry himself hardly indulged in any profound reflections on state-affairs,—desired and had made a sine qua non of those Provinces. It had been the French policy, from the beginning, to delay matters, in order to make the States feel the peril of their position to the full.

"The King, differing and temporising," wrote Herle to the Queen, "would have them fall into that necessity and danger, as that they should offer unto him simply the possession of all their estates. Otherwise, they were to see, as in a glass, their evident and hasty ruin."

Even before the death of Orange, Henry had been determined, if possible, to obtain possession of the island of Walcheren, which controlled the whole country. "To give him that," said Herle, "would be to turn the hot end of the poker towards themselves, and put the

cold part in the King's hand. He had accordingly made a secret offer to William of Orange, through the Princess, of two millions of livres in ready money, or, if he preferred it, one hundred thousand livres yearly of perpetual inheritance, if he would secure to him the island of Walcheren. In that case he promised to declare war upon the King of Spain, to confirm to the States their privileges, and to guarantee to the Prince the earldoms of Holland and Zeeland, with all his other lands and titles."

It is superfluous to say that such offers were only regarded by the Prince as an affront. It was, however, so necessary, in his opinion; to maintain the cause of the reformed churches in France, and to keep up the antagonism between that country and Spain, that the French policy was not abandoned, although the court was always held in suspicion.

But on the death of William, there was a strong reaction against France and in favour of England. Paul Buys, one of the ablest statesmen of the Netherlands, Advocate of Holland, and a confidential friend of William the Silent up to the time of his death, now became the leader of the English party, and employed his most strenuous efforts against the French treaty-having "seen the scope of that court."

With regard to the other leading personages, there was a strong inclination in favour of Queen Elizabeth, whose commanding character inspired great respect. At the same time warmer sentiments of adhesion seem to have been expressed towards the French court, by the same individuals, than the mere language of compliment justified.

Thus, the widowed Princess of Orange was described by Des Pruneaux to his sovereign, as "very desolate, but nevertheless doing all in her power to advance his interests; the Count Maurice, of gentle hopes, as also most desirous of remaining his Majesty's humble servant, while Elector Truchsess was said to be employing himself, in the same cause, with very great affection."

A French statesman resident in the Provinces, whose name has not been preserved, but who was evidently on intimate terms with many eminent Netherlanders, declared that Maurice, "who had a mind entirely French, deplored infinitely the misfortunes of France,

and regretted that all the Provinces could not be annexed to so fair a kingdom. I do assure you," he added, "that he is in no wise English."

Of Count Hohenlo, general-in-chief of the States' army under Prince Maurice, and afterwards his brother-in-law, the same gentleman spoke with even greater confidence. "Count d'Oloc," said he (for by that ridiculous transformation of his name the German general was known to French and English), "with whom I have passed three weeks on board the fleet of the States, is now wholly French, and does not love the English at all. The very first time I saw him, he protested twice or thrice, in presence of members of the States General and of the State Council, that if he had no Frenchmen he could never carry on the war. He made more account," he said, "of two thousand French than of six thousand others, English, or Germans."

Yet all these distinguished persons—the widowed Princess of Orange, Count Maurice, ex-electoral Truchsess, Count Hohenlo—were described to Queen Elizabeth by her confidential agent, then employed in the Provinces, as entirely at that sovereign's devotion.

"Count Maurice holds nothing of the French, nor esteems them," said Herle, "but humbly desired me to signify unto your Majesty that he had in his mind and determination faithfully vowed his service to your Majesty, which should be continued in his actions with all duty, and sealed with his blood; for he knew how much his father and the cause were beholden ever to your Highness's goodness."

The Princess, together with her sister-in-law Countess Schwartzburg, and the young daughters of the late Prince were described on the same occasion "as recommending their service unto her Majesty with a most tender affection, as to a lady of all ladies." "Especially," said Herle, "did the two Princesses in most humble and wise sort, express a certain fervent devotion towards your Majesty."

Electoral Truchsess was spoken of as "a prince well qualified and greatly devoted to her Majesty; who, after many grave and sincere

words had of her Majesty's virtue, calling her 'la fille unique de Dieu, and le bien heureuse Princesse', desired of God that he might do her service as she merited."

And, finally, Count Hollock—who seemed to "be reformed in sundry things, if it hold" (a delicate allusion to the Count's propensity for strong potatoes), was said "to desire humbly to be known for one that would obey the commandment of her Majesty more than of any earthly prince living besides."

There can be no doubt that there was a strong party in favour of an appeal to England rather than to France. The Netherlanders were too shrewd a people not to recognize the difference between the king of a great realm, who painted his face and wore satin petticoats, and the woman who entertained ambassadors, each in his own language, on gravest affairs of state, who matched in her wit and wisdom the deepest or the most sparkling intellects of her council, who made extemporaneous Latin orations to her universities, and who rode on horseback among her generals along the lines of her troops in battle-array, and yet was only the unmarried queen of a petty and turbulent state.

"The reverend respect that is borne to your Majesty throughout these countries is great," said William Herle. They would have thrown themselves into her arms, heart and soul, had they been cordially extended at that moment of their distress; but she was coy, hesitating, and, for reasons already sufficiently indicated, although not so conclusive as they seemed, disposed to temporize and to await the issue of the negotiations between the Provinces and France.

In Holland and Zeeland especially, there was an enthusiastic feeling in favour of the English alliance. "They recommend themselves," said Herle "throughout the country in their consultations and assemblies, as also in their common and private speeches, to the Queen of England's only favour and goodness, whom they call their saviour, and the Princess of greatest perfection in wisdom and sincerity that ever governed. Notwithstanding their treaty now on foot by their deputies with France, they are not more disposed to be governed by the French than to be tyrannized over by the Spaniard;

concluding it to be alike; and even 'commutare non sortem sed servitutum'."

Paul Buys was indefatigable in his exertions against the treaty with France, and in stimulating the enthusiasm for England and Elizabeth. He expressed sincere and unaffected devotion to the Queen on all occasions, and promised that no negotiations should take place, however secret and confidential, that were not laid before her Majesty. "He has the chief administration among the States," said Herle, "and to his credit and dexterity they attribute the despatch of most things. He showed unto me the state of the enemy throughout the provinces, and of the negotiation in France, whereof he had no opinion at all of success, nor any will of his own part but to please the Prince of Orange in his life-time."

It will be seen in the sequel whether or not the views of this experienced and able statesman were lucid and comprehensive. It will also be seen whether his strenuous exertions in favour of the English alliance were rewarded as bountifully as they deserved, by those most indebted to him.

Meantime he was busily employed in making the English government acquainted with the capacity, disposition, and general plans of the Netherlanders.

"They have certain other things in consultation amongst the States to determine of," wrote Herle, "which they were sworn not to reveal to any, but Buys protested that nothing should pass but to your liking and surety, and the same to be altered and disposed as should seem good to your Highness's own authority; affirming to me sincerely that Holland and Zeeland, with the rest of the provinces, for the estimation they had of your high virtue and temperancy, would yield themselves absolutely to your Majesty and crown for ever, or to none other (their liberties only reserved), whereof you should have immediate possession, without reservation of place or privilege."

The important point of the capability of the Provinces to defend themselves, about which Elizabeth was most anxious to be informed, was also fully elucidated by the Advocate. "The means should be such, proceeding from the Provinces," said he, "as your Majesty might defend your interest therein with facility against the

whole world." He then indicated a plan, which had been proposed by the States of Brabant to the States General, according to which they were to keep on foot an army of 15,000 foot and 5000 horse, with which they should be able, "to expulse the enemy and to reconquer their towns and country lost, within three months." Of this army they hoped to induce the Queen to furnish 5000 English footmen and 500 horse, to be paid monthly by a treasurer of her own; and for the assistance thus to be furnished they proposed to give Ostend and Sluys as pledge of payment. According to this scheme the elector palatine, John Casimir, had promised to furnish, equip, and pay 2000 cavalry, taking the town of Maestricht and the country of Limburg, when freed from the enemy, in pawn for his disbursements; while Antwerp and Brabant had agreed to supply 300,000 crowns in ready money for immediate use. Many powerful politicians opposed this policy, however, and urged reliance upon France, "so that this course seemed to be lame in many parts." — [Letter of Herle].

Agents had already been sent both to England and France, to procure, if possible, a levy of troops for immediate necessity. The attempt was unsuccessful in France, but the Dutch community of the reformed religion in London subscribed nine thousand and five florins. This sum, with other contributions, proved sufficient to set Morgan's regiment on foot, which soon after began to arrive in the Netherlands by companies. "But if it were all here at once," said Stephen Le Sieur, "it would be but a breakfast for the enemy."

The agent for the matter in England was De Griyse, formerly bailiff of Bruges; and although tolerably successful in his mission, he was not thought competent for so important a post, nor officially authorised for the undertaking. While procuring this assistance in English troops he had been very urgent with the Queen to further the negotiations between the States and France; and Paul Buys was offended with him as a mischief-maker and an intriguer. He complained of him as having "thrust himself in, to deal and intermeddle in the affairs of the Low Countries unavowed," and desired that he might be closely looked after.

After the Advocate, the next most important statesman in the provinces was, perhaps, Meetkerk, President of the High Court of

Flanders, a man of much learning, sincerity, and earnestness of character; having had great experience in the diplomatic service of the country on many important occasions. "He stands second in reputation here," said Herle, "and both Buys and he have one special care in all practises that are discovered, to examine how near anything may concern your person or kingdom, whereof they will advertise as matter shall fall out in importance."

John van Olden-Barneveldt, afterwards so conspicuous in the history of the country, was rather inclined, at this period, to favour the French party; a policy which was strenuously furthered by Villiers and by Sainte Aldegonde.

Besides the information furnished to the English government, as to the state of feeling and resources of the Netherlands, by Buys, Meetkerk, and William Herle, Walsingham relied much upon the experienced eye and the keen biting humour of Roger Williams.

A frank open-hearted Welshman, with no fortune but his sword, but as true as its steel, he had done the States much important service in the hard-fighting days of Grand Commander Requesens and of Don John of Austria. With a shrewd Welsh head under his iron morion, and a stout Welsh heart under his tawny doublet, he had gained little but hard knocks and a dozen wounds in his campaigning, and had but recently been ransomed, rather grudgingly by his government, from a Spanish prison in Brabant. He was suffering in health from its effects, but was still more distressed in mind, from his sagacious reading of the signs of the times. Fearing that England was growing lukewarm, and the Provinces desperate, he was beginning to find himself out of work, and was already casting about him for other employment. Poor, honest, and proud, he had repeatedly declined to enter the Spanish service. Bribes, such as at a little later period were sufficient to sully conspicuous reputations and noble names, among his countrymen in better circumstances than his own, had been freely but unsuccessfully offered him. To serve under any but the English or States' flag in the Provinces he scorned; and he thought the opportunity fast slipping away there for taking the Papistical party in Europe handsomely by the beard. He had done much manful work in the Netherlands, and was destined to do much more; but he was now discontented, and

thought himself slighted. In more remote regions of the world, the thrifty soldier thought that there might be as good harvesting for his sword as in the thrice-trampled stubble of Flanders.

"I would refuse no hazard that is possible to be done in the Queen's service," he said to Walsingham; "but I do persuade myself she makes no account of me. Had it not been for the duty that nature bound me towards her and my country, I needed not to have been in that case that I am in. Perhaps I could have fingered more pistoles than Mr. Newell, the late Latiner, and had better usage and pension of the Spaniards than he. Some can tell that I refused large offers, in the misery of Alost, of the Prince of Parma. Last of all, Verdugo offered me very fair, being in Loccum, to quit the States' service, and accept theirs, without treachery or betraying of place or man."

Not feeling inclined to teach Latin in Spain, like the late Mr. Newell, or to violate oaths and surrender fortresses, like brave soldiers of fortune whose deeds will be afterwards chronicled, he was disposed to cultivate the "acquaintance of divers Pollacks," from which he had received invitations. "Find I nothing there," said he, "Duke Matthias has promised me courtesy if I would serve in Hungary. If not, I will offer service to one of the Turk's bashaws against the Persians."

Fortunately, work was found for the trusty Welshman in the old fields. His brave honest face often reappeared; his sharp sensible tongue uttered much sage counsel; and his ready sword did various solid service, in leaguer, battle-field, and martial debate, in Flanders, Holland, Spain, and France.

For the present, he was casting his keen glances upon the negotiations in progress, and cavilling at the general policy which seemed predominant.

He believed that the object of the French was to trifle with the States, to protract interminably their negotiations, to prevent the English government from getting any hold upon the Provinces, and then to leave them to their fate.

He advised Walsingham to advance men and money, upon the security of

Sluys and Ostend.

"I dare venture my life," said he, with much energy, "that were Norris, Bingham, Yorke, or Carlisle, in those ports, he would keep them during the Spanish King's life."

But the true way to attack Spain—a method soon afterwards to be carried into such brilliant effect by the naval heroes of England and the Netherlands—the long-sighted Welshman now indicated; a combined attack, namely, by sea upon the colonial possessions of Philip.

"I dare be bound," said he, "if you join with Treslong, the States Admiral, and send off, both, three-score sail into his Indies, we will force him to retire from conquering further, and to be contented to let other princes live as well as he."

In particular, Williams urged rapid action, and there is little doubt, that had the counsels of prompt, quick-witted, ready-handed soldiers like himself, and those who thought with him, been taken; had the stealthy but quick-darting policy of Walsingham prevailed over the solemn and stately but somewhat ponderous proceedings of Burghley, both Ghent and Antwerp might have been saved, the trifling and treacherous diplomacy of Catharine de' Medici neutralized, and an altogether more fortunate aspect given at once to the state of Protestant affairs.

"If you mean to do anything," said he, "it is more than time now. If you will send some man of credit about it, will it please your honour, I will go with him, because I know the humour of the people, and am acquainted with a number of the best. I shall be able to show him a number of their dealings, as well with the French as in other affairs, and perhaps will find means to send messengers to Ghent, and to other places, better than the States; for the message of one soldier is better than twenty boors."

It was ultimately decided—as will soon be related—to send a man of credit to the Provinces. Meantime, the policy of England continued to be expectant and dilatory, and Advocate Buys, after having in vain attempted to conquer the French influence, and bring about the annexation of the Provinces to England, threw down his

office in disgust, and retired for a time from the contest. He even contemplated for a moment taking service in Denmark, but renounced the notion of abandoning his country, and he will accordingly be found, at a later period, conspicuous in public affairs.

The deliberations in the English councils were grave and anxious, for it became daily more obvious that the Netherland question was the hinge upon which the whole fate of Christendom was slowly turning. To allow the provinces to fall back again into the grasp of Philip, was to offer England herself as a last sacrifice to the Spanish Inquisition. This was felt by all the statesmen in the land; but some of them, more than the rest, had a vivid perception of the danger, and of the necessity of dealing with it at once.

To the prophetic eye of Walsingham, the mists of the future at times were lifted; and the countless sails of the invincible Armada, wafting defiance and destruction to England, became dimly visible. He felt that the great Netherland bulwark of Protestantism and liberty was to be defended at all hazards, and that the death-grapple could not long be deferred.

Burghley, deeply pondering, but less determined, was still disposed to look on and to temporize.

The Queen, far-seeing and anxious, but somewhat hesitating, still clung to the idea of a joint protectorate. She knew that the reestablishment of Spanish authority in the Low Countries would be fatal to England, but she was not yet prepared to throw down the gauntlet to Philip. She felt that the proposed annexation of the Provinces to France would be almost as formidable; yet she could not resolve, frankly and fearlessly, to assume the burthen of their protection. Under the inspiration of Burghley, she was therefore willing to encourage the Netherlanders underhand; preventing them at every hazard from slackening in their determined hostility to Spain; discountenancing, without absolutely forbidding, their proposed absorption by France; intimating, without promising, an ultimate and effectual assistance from herself. Meantime, with something of fe-line and feminine duplicity, by which the sex of the great sovereign would so often manifest itself in the most momentous affairs, she would watch and wait, teasing the Provinces, dallying with the

danger, not quite prepared as yet to abandon the prize to Henry or Philip, or to seize it herself.

The situation was rapidly tending to become an impossible one.

Late in October a grave conference was held council, "upon the question whether her Majesty should presently relieve the States of the Low Countries."

It was shown, upon one side, that the "perils to the Queen and to the realm were great, if the King of Spain should recover Holland and Zeeland, as he had the other countries, for lack of succour in seasonable time, either by the French King or the Queen's Majesty."

On the other side, the great difficulties in the way of effectual assistance by England, were "fully remembered."

"But in the end, and upon comparison made," said Lord Burghley, summing up, "betwixt the perils on the one part, and the difficulties on the other," it was concluded that the Queen would be obliged to succumb to the power of Spain, and the liberties of England be hopelessly lost, if Philip were then allowed to carry out his designs, and if the Provinces should be left without succour at his mercy.

A "wise person" was accordingly to be sent into Holland; first, to ascertain whether the Provinces had come to an actual agreement with the King of France, and, if such should prove to be the case, to enquire whether that sovereign had pledged himself to declare war upon Philip. In this event, the wise person was to express her Majesty's satisfaction that the Provinces were thus to be "relieved from the tyranny of the King of Spain."

On the other hand, if it should appear that no such conclusive arrangements had been made, and that the Provinces were likely to fall again victims to the "Spanish tyranny," her Majesty would then "strain herself as far as, with preservation of her own estate, she might, to succour them at this time."

The agent was then to ascertain "what conditions the Provinces would require" upon the matter of succour, and, if the terms seemed reasonable, he would assure them that "they should not be left to the cruelties of the Spaniards."