

THE STORY OF THE WORLD

BOOK III.

THE AWAKENING OF EUROPE

*FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR
1520-1745*



THE LANDING OF THE PILGRIM FATHERS

THE AWAKENING OF EUROPE

BY

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CHAPTER 1

STORY OF THE NETHERLANDS

“God made the sea, but the Hollander made the land.”
—*Old Dutch Proverb.*

FAR away, in the north-west corner of Europe, lie the Netherlands, the lands which are now to play a large part in the world's history. The Low Countries they were called by the men of old time; and with good reason too, for many parts were actually below the level of the sea. Spongy and marshy, bleak and cold, was this corner of the European continent in the olden days.

Winds and waves had wrought sad havoc with the coast. The rough North Sea was ever encroaching on the low-lying land, breaking over the shores with its never-ceasing roar and tumble, and flooding the country below its level whenever the wild west wind blew it home. Not only had the people of this country to contend with wind and wave, but from the other side many great rivers rolled through the land, to empty their waters into

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the North Sea, overflowing their low banks and flooding the surrounding neighbourhood.

The largest of these was the Rhine. Rising amid the snowy Alps, leaping joyously over the famous falls of Schaffhausen, flowing in majesty right through Germany, the Rhine at last reached the Netherlands. The mouth of this famous river gave some trouble to the Hollanders. They made colossal pumps and locks, by which they lifted the water and lowered it into the sea. There was no rest for a lazy river in these parts. The stream must be kept moving, it must do its share of work in the country.

“As long as grass grows and water runs.” This was their idea of For ever.

“I struggle but I emerge.”

This was the motto of Zeeland, with the crest of a lion riding out of the waves, and it sums up the story of the people of the Netherlands. For hundreds of years they fought the angry waters with a stubborn determination, a patient energy, a dauntless genius,—an example to other countries.

They erected great mounds or dykes to keep out the North Sea; they dug canals to direct course of their sluggish rivers and to keep them within bounds. And when the ocean tides were high or the winds blew long from the west; when the heavy snows from the mountains melted, or the rainfall was unusually great, so that the dykes were broken down and the waters rushed in boundless masses over their land, yet the Hollander would not give up.

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With dogged perseverance he began again, so that to-day such an inundation is impossible.

“God made the sea, but we made the land,” they can say to-day with pride. But even to-day these great dykes which keep out the sea have to be watched. Every little hole has to be carefully stopped up or the sea would rush in and devour the land once more. Every man, woman, and child in the country knows the importance of this.

A little Dutch boy was returning from school in the late afternoon, with his bag of books hanging over his shoulder, when he thought he heard the sound of running water. He stood still and listened. Like all other little boys in the Netherlands, he knew that the least crack in a dyke would soon let in the water, that it would cover the land and bring ruin to the people. He ran to the mound and looked about. There he saw a small hole, through which the water had already begun to trickle. He was some way from his home yet. Suppose he were to run on fast and tell some one to come. It might already be too late—the water might even then be rushing over the land. He stooped down on the cold damp ground and put his fat little hand into the hole where the water was running out. It was just big enough to stop up the hole and prevent the water from escaping any more.

His mind was made up; he must stop there till some one came to relieve him. He grew cold and hungry, but no one passed that lonely way. The sun set, the night grew dark, and the cold winds began to blow. Still the little boy kept his hand in the hole.

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Hour after hour passed away, and he grew more and more cold and frightened as the night advanced. At last he saw little streaks of light across the sky; the dawn was coming. By-and-by the sun rose, and the boy knew his long lonely watch must soon be over. He was right. Some workmen going early to work found him crouched on the ground with his little cold hand still thrust into the hole. But the large tears were on his cheeks, and his piteous cries showed how hard he had found it to keep faithful all through the long dark night. The boy was at once set free and the hole was mended. And so it depends on each man to watch the dykes, though there are now bands of watchers appointed by the State for this purpose.

So these people have, as the poet says, “scooped out an empire” for themselves, and kept it by their never-ceasing vigilance and industry.

CHAPTER 2

BRAVE LITTLE HOLLAND

“Brave men are brave from the very first.”
—CORNEILLE.

IT will be interesting to trace the history of these resolute people, who reclaimed their land from the angry North Sea and built busy cities which should play a large part in the history of the world.

The earliest chapter in the history of the Netherlands was written by their conqueror, Julius Cæsar. Why he cast covetous eyes towards these swampy lowlands is hard to see, but he must needs conquer them, and he thought he should have an easy task. At least one tribe wrung from him admiration by its rare courage. When others were begging for mercy, these people swore to die rather than to surrender. At the head of ten Roman legions Cæsar advanced to the banks of one of the many rivers of this low country. But hardly had the Roman horsemen crossed the stream, when down rushed a party of Netherlanders from the summit of a wooded hill and overthrew horses and riders in the stream. For a moment it seemed as if this wild

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lowland tribe was going to conquer the disciplined forces of Rome. Snatching a shield, the world's conqueror plunged into the hottest of the fight and soon turned the tide. The battle was lost, but, true to their vow, the wild Netherlanders refused to surrender. They fought on till the ground was heaped with their dead—fought till they had perished almost to a man. Caesar could respect such courage, and when he left the country, to be governed by Romans, he took back soldiers from the Netherlanders to form his imperial guard in Rome.

When in the fifth century the Romans sailed away from the shores of Britain to defend their own land, they turned their backs on the Netherlands.

Then came the "Wandering of the Nations," when barbarians from the north and west tramped over the country. This was followed by the dark ages, when the Netherlands with the rest of Europe was plunged in sleep.

Charlemagne next arose and added the Netherlands to his great kingdom of the Franks. "Karel de Groote," as he was called, was very fond of this new part of his great possessions. He built himself a beautiful palace at Nimwegen, high up on a table-land raised above the surrounding country. For beauty of scenery he could hardly have chosen a more lovely spot. Below lay some of the many rivers, making their way slowly through the low country to the sea, while the rich meadows and fields beyond were the scenes of legend and poetry of a later age. At Nimwegen to-day the curfew rings at 8.30 every

BRAVE LITTLE HOLLAND

evening. It is often called Keizer Karel's Klok. In the city museum the dead world seems to live again in the relics of the past.

With the death of Karel de Groote came the Norsemen. Up the many creeks and into the rivers of the Netherlands these fierce Vikings pushed their single-masted galleys. For three centuries they were a terror to every sea-coast country.

"From the fury of the Northmen, good Lord, deliver us," sobbed the men of the Netherlands with the rest of Europe.

For further protection the Netherlands were divided up into provinces, each put under a count or lord. Among others was one, Count Dirk, who was set over the little province of Holland. It was a small piece of country along the sea-coast, but it was destined to be the cradle of an empire. And this is the first mention of Holland in history—the low land, the hollow land as it was called. The Count of Holland lived at Haarlem till he built himself a castle to the south, standing some three miles from the sea. To make it safe it was surrounded by a hedge, known as the Count's Hedge—Graven Hage—now The Hague, the Capital of the Netherlands. Then the Counts of Holland also built the new town of Dordrecht. "Every ship that comes up the river shall pay a toll for the new town," said Dirk. But this made the men of other provinces very angry, and the men of Friesland fought over it.

But a time was at hand when they should find something better to fight over than the toll of

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Dordrecht. The new teaching under the name of Christianity was making its way to the Netherlands, and the Counts of Holland were not slow to join the rest of Europe in their rush to the Holy Land, to free the Holy Sepulchre from the hands of the Mohammedans.

One day the men from Holland sailed down the river Maas in twelve ships, gay with banners and streamers, and out into the North Sea, on their way to the Holy Land. They would have to sail down the English Channel, between the coasts of England and France, through the Bay of Biscay and the Straits of Gibraltar, to the eastern ports of the blue Mediterranean, before ever they could reach their destination. But it is probable that the Crusades did more for Holland than Holland did for the Crusades, for by her contact with the East she learnt that of which she had not even dreamt before.

CHAPTER 3

A WEALTH OF HERRINGS

“Commerce changes the fate and genius of nations.”
—T. GRAY.

IT has been said that the Crusades did more for the Netherlands than perhaps the Netherlands did for the Crusades. Thousands of ignorant, half-civilised Hollanders left their cold wet homes in the north to feast their eyes on the sunny land of Syria.

From their huts and rude lives they came into contact with great cities, such as Constantinople and Alexandria. They saw houses of marble and Greek statues; they met men of learning and scholars of Greece and Rome. For the first time they saw the use of linen sheets, carpets, soap, and spices. All the refinement and luxury of the East, the golden sunshine, the brilliant dresses, came before the Hollanders and dazzled them—after their dull lives and overcast climate.

They returned home full of new wants. They, too, must have linen sheets and pillow-cases; they too, must make their food pleasant with the spices of the East. They must build more ships to send round

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to Venice; they must trade by the overland route to the Queen of the Adriatic, and establish closer relations with the East.

Changes, too, passed over the landscape of Holland. The idea of the windmill was brought back from the East. To make their rough winds work, as they blew over the flat land, commended itself to the Hollanders, and very soon hundreds of windmills were working all over the country. To-day they stand in thousands, like sentinels keeping guard over the land. Not only do they pump water, but they saw wood, grind grain, help to load and unload the boats and hoist burdens. Just as the lazy rivers were made to work, so the wind has been made to do its share too. And these mills played a very large part in the commerce that at this time arose in the Netherlands.

It was natural that a people living in constant conflict with the sea should seek their livelihood in fishing and spend much of their time on the water. From the earliest times they were a sea-faring people. "Holland is an island," wrote an old historian, "inhabited by a brave and warlike people, who have never been conquered by their neighbours and who prosecute their commerce on every sea."

So the Hollanders built their ships, and fished their creeks and inlets, and did a thriving trade in herrings.

Early in the fourteenth century there lived a man called Beukels. He was unknown and poor, but he made a great discovery, which did much to enrich his country. He found out how to keep herrings by

A WEALTH OF HERRINGS

curing them, so that they could be packed in barrels and exported. Herrings were a very valuable food in those days, when the Church demanded much fasting for her members. For a long time the Hollanders kept the herring-fishing to themselves. They sailed across to the British coasts opposite and fished in the bays and inlets of Scotland, and they became rich.

“The foundations of Amsterdam are laid on herring-bones,” they used to say of one of their most wealthy towns. So herring-fishery helped to lay the foundation of the wealth of the Netherlands.

But there were soon other sources of wealth. Flax was brought back from Egypt and grown in Holland, until Dutch flax became famous all over Europe. Linen-factories sprang up. Tablecloths, shirts, handkerchiefs, were manufactured. For a long time linen sheets, pillow-cases, and shirts were used only by kings and nobles. They were rough and dark-coloured; but the Dutch studied the art of bleaching, till all over Europe the “finest linen, white as snow,” was known as holland. The ground around Haarlem was used largely for this process of bleaching or spreading out the sheets of linen in the sun, till the country looked as if a snowstorm had whitened the earth.

The wool trade, carried on chiefly in the south of the Netherlands, was a source of power, and the Flemish weavers were famous throughout Europe. The towns of Ghent and Bruges had long been centres of importance; they were among the richest

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towns in Europe. From foreign lands came raw material to be made up here. Every year the famous "Northern Squadron" from Venice visited the neighbourhood; it was the great market-place of English wool, and thrived until that day when Vasco da Gama found the route to India by the Cape of Good Hope. Then, with Venice, the famous cities of Ghent and Bruges fell.

"Grass grew in the fair and pleasant streets of Bruges, and seaweed clustered about the marble halls of Venice."

The next city to rise to great importance was Antwerp, which soon became the commercial capital not only of the Netherlands, but of the whole world. This was under Charles V., one of the greatest figures in the early part of the sixteenth century, whom it will be interesting now to know.

CHAPTER 4

A DUTCH REFORMER

“Erasmus laid the egg and Luther hatched it.”
—*Old Monks of the Reformation.*

THE Netherlands now became absorbed in the greater kingdom of Charles V., who ruled over the largest empire since the days of Charlemagne. He was the grandson of that Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain who had driven the Moors from Granada and sent Columbus on his great voyage to the New World. From his father he inherited the Netherlands, and in the year 1519 he was elected Emperor over the heads of the Kings of France and England, both claimants for the high position. His reign was full of importance, not only for the Netherlands, but for the whole world; for a wonderful change was passing over Europe—that great Renaissance, at which we have already glanced for a moment. The new learning was spreading rapidly now, and the great empire of this Charles V. was not behind-hand to adopt it. Indeed Holland was to produce one of the greatest scholars of the age in Erasmus, the

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forerunner of Martin Luther, the famous German Reformer.

“I have given up my whole soul to Greek learning,” said this man in the early days of his enthusiasm, “and as soon as I get any money I shall buy Greek books, and then I shall buy some clothes.”

Erasmus was born at Rotterdam, one of the famous towns of the Netherlands at this time, in the year 1467, seven years after the death of the sailor Prince of Portugal. He was a bright little boy with flaxen hair, grey-blue eyes, and with the voice of an angel.

“This little fellow will come to something by-and-by,” said a famous scholar, patting the boy’s flaxen head; for he had been struck with the ability of Erasmus as he inspected the school where he was learning. The boy had a passion for study. He devoured any book he could get hold of. He was always at work, writing poetry or essays; always thinking and pondering, though full of life and brightness. But monastery life was distasteful to him, and at the age of twenty he was glad to escape to Paris, still wearing his monk’s dress, to continue his studies. He yearned to go to Italy, the centre of the new learning; to mix with the great Greek scholars; to breathe in the new life, which had not as yet taken root in his own country. But money was not forthcoming for this, and he made his way to England, where the new learning had been well received.

A DUTCH REFORMER

“I have found in Oxford,” he soon wrote, “so much polish and learning that now I hardly care about going to Italy at all. When I listen to my friend Colet, it seems like listening to Plato himself.”

Amid a little group of English scholars Erasmus found the sympathy he needed. Still he worked on at Greek translations, and wrote a new grammar-book for the little scholars under the new learning. Moreover, he gained some repute by writing a song of triumph over the old world of darkness and ignorance, which was to vanish away before the light and knowledge of the new era.

But more than this. He had studied his Bible very deeply and carefully, specially the New Testament and the writings of the early Fathers. He was greatly struck with the difference between the teaching of Christ by His disciples in the old days of long ago, and the distorted version of Christianity now taught by the priests, monks, and clergy of Europe. The people knew only what they were taught by the priests. Copies of the Bible were rare, shut up in convent libraries, and read only by the few. Erasmus saw that before any reform could take place the Bible must be in the hands of all, rich and poor alike.

“I wish that even the weakest woman might read the Gospels and the Epistles of St Paul,” he says as he works during the long hours at his translation and notes. “I long for the day when the husbandman shall sing portions of them to himself as he follows the plough, when the weaver shall hum

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them to the tune of his shuttle, when the travellers shall while away with their stories the weariness of the journey.”

Since his boyhood printing-presses had been established everywhere. At last his work was finished, text and translation printed, and the wonderful story of Christ, His disciples and His teaching, was revealed to an astonished world in all its beautiful simplicity.

“A single candle shone far in the universal darkness.”

The New Testament of Erasmus became the topic of the day; every household eagerly purchased a copy; it was read and discussed with alternate fear and joy. A new era was dawning. Erasmus had sown the seeds of that more far-reaching movement which Martin Luther was to finish. He had prepared the way; but a greater than he was needed to stand up boldly, with the eyes of Europe on him, to denounce the abuses that had crept into the Christian teaching, and to show mankind the Christ of the New Testament.

CHAPTER 5

THE STORY OF MARTIN LUTHER

“The whole world and its history was waiting for this man.”
—CARLYLE.

ERASMUS was sixteen years old when Martin Luther was born,—Martin Luther, the great German Reformer, whose name was soon to be known throughout the whole continent of Europe. This is the story of his life. He was born in the year 1483. His father was a humble miner, his mother was noted for her goodness and virtue. When quite a little child, his parents wished to make a “scholar” of him—so he was early taught to read and write, and at six years old he was sent to school. Both at home and at school his training was very severe; his father whipped him for mere trifles, and one day poor little Martin was beaten fifteen times! He was bright and clever, but he had a strong will of his own, and a love of fun and mischief. When he was fourteen his parents could not afford to keep him any longer, so they sent him forth into the world with his bag on his back, to seek for learning from the charity of

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strangers. With a boy friend he set forth to walk to Magdeburg, where there was a school for poor boys kept by the Franciscan monks. In order to get food on the way, the boys had to beg or to sing. They were thankful enough for a morsel of bread or a night's shelter. Indeed, life became such a hard struggle, that Martin told himself he would never be a scholar, and it would be better to return home and win an honest livelihood with his spade. But at this moment the tide turned. By his sweet voice he attracted the notice of a good lady, who took pity on him and gave him a comfortable home. Here he worked hard, making great progress in Latin, till he was eighteen. By this time his father had made enough money to send him to a university, where he took his degree in 1505.

And now a strange thing happened, that altered his whole life. One day he was walking with a friend, when a tremendous thunderstorm came on. A sudden vivid flash of lightning struck the friend at his side, who fell down dead at his feet. The suddenness of the young man's death made a great impression on Martin Luther. Struck to the heart, he made up his mind that henceforth he would devote his life to God and God's service. In spite of his father's protests he became a monk. For the first two years his life was a very hard one: his food was very scanty, he had to perform the lowliest tasks, and to beg for alms and bread. Whatever spare time he had, he worked hard at his books, studying the epistles and gospels diligently. In the library of the university he found a complete Bible in Latin. It was

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the first time he had seen one. He devoured it eagerly. A new light came into his life, and in his close study of the Bible he strengthened himself for his future work. Before long he had risen to a position of importance in the monastery. He became a priest and went to live at Wittenberg—a town which he made famous by his name. In 1509 he began to lecture on the Scriptures. Bibles were not in the hands of all as they are to-day, and Martin Luther was able to tell his countrymen a great deal that they did not know, by reason of his deep learning. His lectures made a great impression.

“This monk,” said the head of the university, “will bring in a new doctrine.”

He also began now to preach in the churches. He was very earnest, and the people who listened to him were deeply moved at his words.

In 1511 he was sent on a mission to Rome, where Leo X. was Pope. Now, from early times there has been a Pope (*Papa*) or Father of Rome, who in the Middle Ages had come to be looked on as the Head of the Christian Church by many, if not all, of the countries of Europe. At first the Pope was a Bishop of Rome, as other Bishops were in other cities, but when Rome was no longer the sole imperial city, the power of the Bishops became greater and greater until, in the twelfth century, under Innocent III., the papal authority reached its height.

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Now during the Middle Ages many abuses had crept into the Church. One of these was known as the “sale of indulgences.”

All feel it right that sinners should suffer for their sins, but there is no Biblical foundation for the teaching that by money payments a sinner may be saved from the punishment of his sin. Yet, in those days, persons who paid money received an “indulgence,” and agents went about the country selling them.

One of these, named John Tetzel, came to Germany. He disgusted Martin Luther by his method of extorting money from ignorant people, and being a man of great courage, Luther felt it his duty to remonstrate. He stood up boldly in his pulpit and denounced the system openly.

It was a tremendous moment. It was indeed the visible beginning of the Reformation—that great movement which was to spread wider and wider until it should affect the whole Christian world.

Into the deeper causes of the Reformation we cannot enter here. The revival of Greek learning had caused men to study the Scriptures for themselves as Luther did, and this caused dissatisfaction with the mediaeval corruption of the Roman Church.

CHAPTER 6

THE DIET OF WORMS

“Here stand I. I cannot act otherwise. So help me God!”
—MARTIN LUTHER.

TETZEL was coming to Wittenberg in the autumn of 1517 when Luther determined on more open opposition. It was the eve of All Saints when he posted up on the door of the church ninety-five reasons against the sale of indulgences. He had no idea what a storm he was raising. He did not wish to quarrel with the Pope, only to expose this abuse in the Church. But he had kindled the spark that fired the great Reformation. Widespread excitement followed, and at last Luther was summoned to Rome to answer for his ninety-five reasons. But the distance was great, and it was agreed that he should go to Augsburg, where a representative of the Pope would meet him.

Martin Luther was but a poor friar still, and he walked the distance, clad in his brown frock with his few wants on his back. His fellow-citizens attended him to the gates and followed him some way along the road.

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“Luther forever!” they cried as they bade him farewell.

“No,” he answered quietly, “Christ for ever!”

Arrived at Augsburg, the cardinal sent by the Pope received Luther with all civility. He made no doubt that he could soon settle this son of a German miner; and so perhaps he might, had he been the right man. But he took a high hand, and simply told him to withdraw his opposition and retract his words at once.

“What is wrong?” asked Luther.

The cardinal refused to discuss matters.

“I am come to command, not to argue,” he replied.

But the little monk refused to retract.

Then, history says, the cardinal grew angry.

“What!” he cried. “What! Do you think the Pope cares for the opinion of a German peasant? The Pope’s little finger is stronger than all Germany. Do you expect princes to defend you. I tell you, No; and where will you be then?”

“Then, as now, in the hands of Almighty God,” answered Luther.

Then cardinal and monk parted. But Luther was too deeply moved to keep silent.

“God hurries and drives me,” he said. “I am not master of myself. I wish to be quiet and am hurried into the midst of tumults.”

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At this moment Charles V. became Emperor of Germany and ruler of half the world. Matters were now referred to him, for Luther was taking firmer ground and attacking not only the abuses of the papacy, but the whole Church of Rome.

At last a command came from the Pope forbidding Luther to preach any more. He replied by burning the document at the gate of the city. Crowds gathered to see the fire blaze up. Then Luther, pale as death, stepped forward holding in his hand the document with the Pope's seal upon it. He knew full well what he was doing now as he dropped it into the flames that rose high that wintry afternoon at Wittenberg. The crowds shouted approval and admiration.

"It was the shout of the awakening of nations," says a famous writer. Not only the little crowd at Wittenberg, but the whole world, was looking on. For that little fire lit up the whole of Europe. Luther was now ordered by the Emperor Charles to appear before a council, or Diet, as it was called, which should meet at Worms, a city on the Rhine. He was warned by his friends not to go, for feeling ran high. There would surely be bloodshed, they told him, and he would never leave Worms alive.

"Were there as many devils in Worms as there are tiles upon the roofs of the houses, I would go on," replied Luther.

The whole country was moved by his heroism. Whether he was right or whether he was

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wrong, this was a brave man. In April 1521, at ten in the morning, he arrived at Worms in the covered waggon provided for him.

“God will be with me,” he said as he descended from the waggon.

Crowds assembled to see him as he passed to the council chamber, this resolute little monk, who was defying the Pope of Rome.

Inside, the scene was most impressive. On a raised platform sat Charles V., ruler of half the world. Archbishops, ministers, princes, stood on either side to hear and judge this son of a miner who had made the world ring with his name. In the body of the hall stood knights and nobles, stern hard men in gleaming armour. Between them Luther was led, still in his monk’s dress. As he passed up the hall a knight touched him on the arm.

“Pluck up thy spirit, little monk,” he said. “Some of us here have seen warm work in our time, but never knight in this company more needed a stout heart than thou needest it now. If thou hast faith, little monk, go on; in the name of God, forward!”

“Yes,” said Luther, throwing back his head, “in the name of God, forward!”

At last he stood alone before his judges. “It was the greatest scene in modern European history—the greatest moment in the modern history of men.”

THE DIET OF WORMS

The books he had written lay on a table at hand. The titles were read aloud, and he was asked if he had written them.

“Yes,” was his firm answer.

Would he withdraw all he had written? No—that was impossible. For two long hours Luther defended his opinions. He would retract nothing. They might kill him if they wished, and he knew death was the penalty, but he was ready to die in such a cause. What he said he now repeated, for the matter had gone far beyond the sale of indulgences by this time.

“Here stand I. I cannot act otherwise. So help me God!”

Uttering these famous words, he ended.

The council broke up in excitement, and Luther was free to go home.

“It is past! it is past!” he cried in heartrending accents, as he clasped his hands above his head.

The verdict was not long in coming. It was against him. He must preach no more, teach no more. The emperor of half the world must uphold the authority of the Pope.

“Be it so,” said Luther, uncomplaining. “I will bear anything for his Imperial Majesty and the Empire, but the Word of God must not be bound.”

For the next year he was sheltered by one of his friends in an old German castle, lest he should suffer violence from the hands of those who

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disapproved his conduct. But after a time he returned to Wittenberg,—the scene of his old labours,—while others carried on the work of reformation which he had begun.

CHAPTER 7

AN HISTORIC SCENE

“Europe’s eye is fixed on mighty things,
The fall of empires and the fate of kings.”
—BURNS.

THE great movement known as the Reformation now swept through Europe. Gradually the conflict, begun in Germany between Luther and the Pope, passed into England, Scotland, Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands. Throughout the long vexed reign of the Emperor Charles V. this war of religion raged fiercely, intolerantly. Those who followed Luther were known as the Protestants, or those who protested against the power of the Pope, while those who acknowledged the supreme power of Rome were Roman Catholics.

In the year 1530 a religious peace was made at Augsburg. Though Martin Luther was not allowed to appear, he helped to draw up twenty-eight articles of the faith professed by the Protestants.

Luther passed to his rest, but his followers carried on the conflict. Twenty-six years after the Diet of Worms Charles the emperor was at

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Wittenberg. He asked to see the tomb of Martin Luther. As he stood gazing at it, full of many thoughts, some one suggested that the body should be taken up, tied to a stake, and burned in the market-place of the town. There was nothing unusual in the suggestion. Most heretics were burned in those days. They thought to please the emperor, but Charles was "one of nature's gentlemen."

"I war not with the dead," he answered quietly.

But the troubles and toils of a long reign had already begun to tell on the emperor, and he determined to lay down a burden which he was no longer fitted to bear. The 25th of October 1555 was fixed for the great abdication of this mighty emperor. It was to take place in the palace at Brussels, the Court residence of the emperor in the Netherlands. His beloved son Philip was to succeed him.

Long before the appointed hour crowds had filled the historic palace. The wealth of the Netherlands was there. There were the knights of the famous Order of the Golden Fleece; there was the flower of Flemish chivalry—bishops, counts, barons, representatives from all the emperor's vast empire. As the clock struck three the hero of the whole scene arrived. "Cæsar," as he was more often called, in the classic language of the day, came in leaning heavily on the shoulder of William of Orange, the man who was to play such a large part in the story of the Netherlands. They were followed by

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Philip, and accompanied by an immense throng of glittering Spanish warriors. Here stood Count Egmont, the idol of the people, whose victories were to resound through Europe, tall, gallant, ill-fated. Here, too, was Count Horn, sullen and gloomy, though as yet ignorant of his coming tragedy.

The whole company rose to their feet as the emperor entered, and all eyes were directed towards him and his young son. Charles himself, though not yet fifty-six, was bent with old age, crippled with gout, worn with anxiety. It was with some difficulty that he supported himself even with the aid of a crutch. Philip, his son, had the same broad forehead and blue eyes of his father; but he was very small, with thin legs, a narrow chest, and the timid air of an invalid. He had been married but a year since to Mary of England, a valuable alliance to this great empire which was now passing into his weak hands.

Presently the emperor rose, supporting himself upon the shoulder of a handsome young man of two-and-twenty. Then he spoke to the vast throng before him. He sketched shortly his wars, his nine expeditions into Germany, six to Spain, seven to Italy, four to France, two to England, ten to the Netherlands, two to Africa, and eleven voyages by sea. He assured his subjects that he had striven to uphold the Roman Catholic religion. They knew of his lifelong opposition to Martin Luther. Now he told them life was ebbing away. Instead of an old man whose strength was past, they should have a young man in the prime of his youthful manhood to rule over them. Turning to the fair-haired son at his

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side, he bequeathed to him the magnificent empire, begging him to prove himself worthy of so great an inheritance. He entreated the nations under him to help in the colossal task of putting down the Protestants in the empire; then, beseeching them to pardon his own shortcomings, he ceased.

Sobs were heard in every part of the hall, and tears flowed from many eyes, as the old emperor sank back, pale and fainting, into his golden chair. The tears poured freely down his furrowed cheeks as Philip dropped on his knees and kissed his hand with reverence. Raising his son, he kissed him tenderly.

So the curtain fell for ever upon the mightiest emperor since the days of Charlemagne, and when it rose again Philip had begun the long and tremendous tragedy which lasted till his death.

CHAPTER 8

HOW THE TROUBLE BEGAN

“Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the Eternal Silence.”

—WORDSWORTH.

PHILIP was now left to gather up the reins of his mighty empire, keeping ever in view the desire of his father to crush the Protestants out of the land. Nowhere had they increased more rapidly than in the Netherlands. The first Dutch Bible had been printed some thirty years before this time, at Amsterdam, but the study of it had been forbidden by the emperor under pain of death.

“And if you will not obey me, you shall be burned,” he added.

Two monks were burned at once for disobeying the royal command—the first Protestant martyrs of the Netherlands, the leaders of a great host who were afterwards burnt at the stake for conscience’ sake. Still the numbers of Luther’s followers increased. A further step was taken.

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Men called Inquisitors were sent by the emperor to question the people about their belief, with instructions to burn alive all those who took part with Luther against the Pope. But, as in the days of the early Christians in Rome, the martyrdom of the Protestants only tended to strengthen their faith. Hundreds and thousands had been burnt in the Netherlands under the Emperor Charles. It was not likely that Philip would be more tolerant. To begin with, he had no sympathy with the Netherlands. Born and educated in Spain, he was Spanish to the backbone, and his great idea was to make Spain the capital of his empire, so that he might rule from there. So four years after his accession, he made his sister Margaret Regent of the Netherlands, and sailed away from Flushing for sunny Spain, never to return.

“I shall not rest so long as there is one man left believing in the teaching of Martin Luther,” he said as he left his sister to carry out his instructions. And the Inquisition went forward more rigidly than ever before.

But no sooner had Philip turned his back than the men of the Netherlands began to show their discontent. Spanish soldiers had been left behind to enforce the Inquisition; day by day men were dragged from their homes, tortured, and killed for reading the Bible in Dutch, or for listening to Protestant teaching. In their misery many of them went to England, where they were kindly treated, and where there never was any Inquisition.

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Meanwhile Margaret saw the growing frenzy of the people, and grew alarmed. She was a rigid Roman Catholic herself, but she saw that her brother was pushing things too far in the Netherlands. She wrote despairing letters to him, describing the gloomy state of the country and her fears of a rebellion. She sent the Count Egmont in person to try and alarm him as to the serious state of affairs.

But nothing was done. At last the nobles of the land determined to intercede. Some 200 of them made their way to the abode of Margaret in Brussels with a petition. An immense crowd watched them with shouts and cheers, for were they not the deliverers of the land from the tyranny of the Spanish Inquisition? They passed through the great hall where ten years before Charles had abdicated his throne, and entered the council-chamber. The document was read to Margaret. It told her what she already knew but it affected her deeply, and at the end she remained quite silent with tears raining down her cheeks.

“Is it possible that your highness is afraid of these Beggars?” cried one standing by her. “Take my advice and you will drive them faster down the steps of the palace than they came up.”

Begun in a jest, the name of Beggars became the watchword of these men, the famous cry of liberty, which was to ring over land and sea, amid burning cities, on blood-stained decks, through the smoke and din of many a battlefield. They dressed themselves in the beggar’s garb of coarse grey, they

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wore the beggar's wallet and common felt caps, while each wore a newly made badge with the words, "Faithful to the King, even to the beggar's sack." They shaved off their beards to resemble beggars yet more nearly. Hundreds of Netherlanders now became Beggars, until they became as "numerous as the sands on the sea-shore."

"Long live the Beggars!" cried the people, until Margaret grew more and more alarmed at their gathering numbers and their defiant air. And still her brother Philip was blind to the coming danger.

"You have done wrong," he wrote to her. "We will not be less cruel to the Protestants. I will not give up the Inquisition."

CHAPTER 9

THE STORM BURSTS

“Like one fierce cloud over a waste of waves
Hung Tyranny.”

—SHELLEY.

THE answer from Philip had come, but a more terrible one was to follow. The news soon spread through the already heart-broken Netherlands, that the Duke of Alva was on his way with a splendid Spanish army, to suppress in the country the struggle for religious liberty. All knew what this meant. Alva's name was known and feared throughout Europe. Like his royal master, he would have no mercy, no pity on the Netherlands. He had come to conquer, not to make peace.

“I have tamed men of iron in my day,” he had said with contempt; “shall I not easily crush these men of butter?”

The whole country shuddered at the arrival of this man, as they prepared, almost hopelessly, to defend their religious liberty to the end. Alva's first act was to get rid of the Counts Egmont and Horn, who, though rigid Roman Catholics, had openly

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showed their disgust at the cruelty and injustice of the Inquisition. Professing great friendship for them, he invited them both to his house in Brussels one evening to talk over the plans—so he said—of a great castle he meant to build in Antwerp. The counts went, though they had been warned of treachery. A large plan of the proposed castle lay on the table, and the counts discussed it warmly with Alva. Suddenly Alva, feigning illness, left the room. Not long after, the party broke up. The Count Horn had left, and Egmont was leaving, when he was requested to stay behind a moment. Then a Spanish soldier ordered him to give up his sword; others rushed in, and he was hurried to a dark room with barred windows and hung with black. Meanwhile the Count Horn had been arrested outside, and both were sent to a dungeon in the Castle of Ghent.

Having accomplished this, Alva next appointed a council of men to help him in carrying out the king's commands. This council is known to history by the terrible name of the "Blood-Council," and so thoroughly did it perform its deadly work that in three months 1800 human beings had suffered death at its hands. Men, women, children were beheaded or burnt. There were stakes and scaffolds in every village, every hour tolled the church bells for one who had suffered in their midst. It seemed as if the spirit of the nation was broken, as if the suffering people could endure no more.

Having been confined in the Castle of Ghent for nearly a year, the Counts Egmont and Horn were now brought up for trial before the Blood-Council.

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They were found guilty and condemned to die by the sword on the following day, their heads to hang on high in some public place decreed by Alva. He knew the death of the counts would have a great effect on the people of the Netherlands.

It was a summer morning in the June of 1568. Three thousand Spanish troops were drawn up in battle array round the scaffold, which had been set up in the large square at Brussels. Then Count Egmont was led forth. He wore a robe of red damask, over which was thrown a short black mantle worked in gold, while on his head he wore a black silk hat with plumes.

“Hear my cry, O God, and give ear unto my prayer,” he cried as he walked to his death.

He was beheaded together with his friend and countryman, Count Horn. As Alva had foretold, their deaths made a deep impression on the public mind. If tears fell from the eyes of the Netherlanders, they also fell from those of the Spanish soldiers, who had respected the counts as brave and valiant generals. It is said, too, that tears were even seen on the iron cheek of Alva, who was gazing at the ghastly scene from a window opposite. But from that hour the people hated Alva with a more bitter hatred than before. The death of such nobles of high birth filled the land with horror and anguish. They determined never to rest till they had overthrown the power of Spain.

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Alva was now Governor-General of the Netherlands, and Margaret had left the country for ever.

CHAPTER 10

BEGGARS OF THE SEA

“Long live the Beggars! Christians, ye must cry.
Long live the Beggars! pluck up courage then.
Long live the Beggars! if ye would not die.
Long live the Beggars! shout, ye Christian men.”
—*Beggar's Song* (1570)

THE story of the fight of the Netherlands for liberty now becomes more or less the story of one man's life. That man was William of Orange, or William the Silent, as he was called from his quiet ways. It was on his shoulder that the broken-down old emperor had leant when, thirteen years before this, he had resigned his empire and returned to Spain, leaving Philip to manage his affairs.

William of Orange had been left in the Netherlands to rule over the provinces in the north—Holland, Zealand, Utrecht, and Friesland. He soon discovered Philip's plan of planting the Inquisition in the Netherlands, and from this time up to the last tragic moment of his life he toiled to suppress it and to uphold the ancient rights and liberties of his country. From this time he came forward to champion the cause of the Netherlands.

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He was to prove, indeed, the “guiding-star of a whole brave nation.” Of him it would be truly said that he went through life “bearing the load of a people’s sorrows upon his shoulders with a smiling face.”

“Tranquil amid raging waves,” was the motto of his life. And perhaps no man ever carried out their life’s decree more completely than did this man, William the Silent.

He had been born in Germany and brought up as a follower of Luther, but Charles V. had carried him off to Spain and educated him as a Roman Catholic. When Philip introduced the Inquisition and burnt people for their opinions, William grew very thoughtful. He thought that Christians of every kind should live together in peace, and for this end he worked in a cruel age; which could not understand so high a creed. The result of his own deep thought, combined with all that had passed, was, that he returned to the belief of his boyhood, and enrolled himself for ever a soldier of the Reformation.

William had been in Germany, when his friends the Counts Egmont and Horn had been led forth to die in the square at Brussels, raising troops for his brothers to march against the Duke of Alva. But they had fought in vain. They were no match for the brilliant Spanish commander and his well-trained troops.

Unsuccessful by land, William, undaunted, turned his eyes to the sea. The men of the

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Netherlands were more at home on the sea, after all; they had always been sailors and fishermen, and every sea-coast city had its ships. They would chase the Spaniard by sea and destroy the ships sailing to ruin their fair country. So the "Sea Beggars," as they were called, began their wild work, sailing over the high seas, living as the old Vikings had done, by pillage and plunder.

One day—it was the 1st of April—they were coasting about the mouth of the Meuse, when they found they had eaten all their food. There were some 300 of them at most, and they must land in order to avert starvation. The little seaport town of Briel, or The Brille, lies near the mouth of the broad river Meuse. It was known to be in the hands of the Duke of Alva, like the rest of the country, at this time; but the Sea Beggars were hungry, the Sea Beggars were also desperate. So about two o'clock on this April afternoon a ferryman from Briel saw the squadron sailing up the broad mouth of the river towards Briel. He at once gave the alarm that the Sea Beggars were here, though secretly the stout-hearted ferryman was in sympathy with the marauders.

The inhabitants of Briel were struck with terror. "How many of the Sea Beggars were coming?"

"There might be some 5000," carelessly answered the ferryman. The Spaniards and townspeople decided to take refuge in flight. They sent two men to confer with the strangers, while they fled from the town. So the Sea Beggars entered

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the deserted town of Briel, and the admiral took lawful possession of it in the name of William of Orange.

It was the first step in the freedom of Holland, and it was achieved by some 250 wild seamen driven from their country by Spanish rulers.

“Up with Orange!” was the cry henceforth wrung from the very hearts of the stricken people.

The hero prince should yet come to his own again. The first ray of light had penetrated the gloom of years, and all hands were now stretched out to William the Silent, who should yet save their country.

And while the rage of the Duke of Alva knew no bounds, the men of Holland sang aloud in their joy the popular couplet—

“On April Fools’ Day
Duke Alva’s spectacles were stolen away.”

CHAPTER 11

THE MASSACRE OF ST BARTHOLOMEW

“ ’Twas pitiful, ’twas wondrous pitiful.”

—SHAKSPERE.

BUT the Netherlands was not the only place where persecution for religion was going on. Though Spain and the Netherlands lay paralysed under the heavy hand of the Inquisition, yet France and England were taking part, together with the rest of Europe, in the struggle between Protestants and Roman Catholics. And this very year, when the Protestants seemed to be gaining ground in the Netherlands, France was to be stained with a crime which can never be forgotten, and which historians must always remember, as one of the greatest blots in the annals of mankind. This was the wholesale massacre of the Protestants, or Huguenots as they were called, in France, on a terrible summer night in the year 1572.

Francis, King of France, had left a delicate little brother to succeed him on the throne, and his mother, Catherine de Medici, was to govern the

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kingdom till the boy Charles was old enough and strong enough to rule it himself. She was a rigid Roman Catholic, and hated the Huguenots with her whole heart. Indeed, like her neighbour Philip over the Pyrenees, she made up her mind to crush them out of the country.

The leaders of the French Huguenots were the young Henry of Navarre and the Prince of Condé, and it was against these two that Catherine de Medici plotted. She planned a marriage between her daughter Margaret and young Henry of Navarre, the former being a Roman Catholic, the latter a Huguenot. It seemed strange to those who looked on, and men grew to suspect the motives of the Queen-Regent.

“We shall marry the two religions,” said the young King of France, who was entirely under his mother’s control.

Still, amid murmurs of discontent, the wedding preparations went forward, until the day arrived for Henry, now King of Navarre, to come to Paris for his bride. Attended by the Prince of Condé, the old warrior Huguenot Admiral Coligny, and 800 distinguished followers, the King of Navarre rode into the French capital, his handsome face and winning smile attracting all alike. Still there were murmurs of disapproval, and the air was heavy with evil rumours.

The wedding-day came. It was the 18th of August, a glorious summer morning. Cannons roared, bells rang out from every steeple, crowds

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lined the street as King Henry, dressed in pale yellow satin adorned with silver and pearls, led out his young bride. It was a gorgeous sight. Bishops and archbishops led the way in robes of gold, cardinals in scarlet, knights blazing with orders, officers of State—all added to the splendour of the sight.

The next three days were spent in festivities. All seemed peace and goodwill. The young king, Charles IX., was making friends with the Admiral Coligny; he already loved his new brother-in-law, Henry of Navarre. Catherine grew alarmed lest her plot should, after all, fail, and her own power over the young king should wane. She gave orders for the Admiral Coligny to be killed. Her commands were imperfectly carried out. The Admiral was badly wounded, but not killed. When Charles heard the news he was in an agony of surprise and fear. His mother was in a panic. Huguenots gathered in angry crowds and discussed the deed, Henry of Navarre vowed vengeance on the would-be murderer.

It was after dinner on the 23rd of August that Catherine led her son outside into the private gardens of the Tuileries to unfold her plan. The time, she said, was ripe. Eight thousand Huguenots were in Paris breathing revenge. In one hour the whole hated body of them might be put to death. To this the young king's sanction must be obtained. And first of all Coligny must be killed. Charles burst into one of his fits of passion.

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Catherine de Medici planning the Massacre

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“Woe to any one who touches a hair of his head!” he cried. “He is the only friend I have, save my brother of Navarre.”

But Catherine would not give in. She knew she must conquer at last. And she did. Lashed into a frenzy, the young king started to his feet.

“Kill the Admiral, then, if you like!” he screamed; “but kill all the Huguenots with him—all—all—all, so that not one be left to reproach me with this deed.”

The word was spoken. There was no time to lose. Hastily through the darkness of the starless summer night preparations went forward.

“Let every true Catholic tie a white band on his arm, put a white cross on his cap, and begin the vengeance of God,” went forth the order.

The signal was to be given by the great bell of the Palace of Justice at two o’clock in the morning. Soon after midnight Catherine went to her son. He was pacing his room in an agony of passion, swearing the Huguenots should not die.

“It is too late to retreat, even if it were possible,” declared Catherine.

Feverishly mother and son awaited the signal. As the harsh sound of the bell rang through the silent summer night the uproar began. The sound of clanging bells, crashing doors, musket-shots was followed by the shrieks of the victims and the yells of the crowd, till the stoutest hearts quailed and the strongest trembled. Shaking in every limb, the poor

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young king shouted for the massacre to be stopped. It was too late. Already beacon-fires had sent the signal through the land of France.

Old men, young girls, helpless children, were alike smitten down. Through the long dark night the slaughter continued, until Paris was such a scene of terror as human eyes have rarely seen.

In vain did Charles order the massacre to be stopped at the end of one day. It was continued for a whole week, till some 80,000 Huguenots had been slain.

And “the heart of Protestant Europe stood still with horror.”