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BELGIUM

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GEORGE W. T. OMOND
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[Frontispiec

BRUSSELS

The Hôtel de Ville, a corner of the Grande Place,
showing La Maison des Brasseurs, La Maison du Cygne,
and La Maison de l'Étoile.

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Sketch-map at the end of Volume.

BRUGES AND WEST FLANDERS**CHAPTER I****THE MARKET-PLACE AND BELFRY—EARLY HISTORY OF BRUGES**

EVERY visitor to 'the quaint old Flemish city' goes first to the Market-Place. On Saturday mornings the wide space beneath the mighty Belfry is full of stalls, with white canvas awnings, and heaped up with a curious assortment of goods. Clothing of every description, sabots and leathern shoes and boots, huge earthenware jars, pots and pans, kettles, cups and saucers, baskets, tawdry-coloured prints—chiefly of a religious character—lamps and candlesticks, the cheaper kinds of Flemish pottery, knives and forks, carpenters' tools, and such small articles as reels of thread, hatpins, tape, and even bottles of coarse scent, are piled on the stalls or spread out on the rough stones wherever there is a vacant space. Round the stalls, in the narrow spaces between them, the people move about, talking, laughing, and bargaining. Their native Flemish is the tongue they use amongst themselves; but many of them speak what passes for French at Bruges, or even a few words of broken English, if some unwary stranger from across the Channel is rash enough to venture on doing business with these sharp-witted, plausible folk.

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At first sight this Market-Place, so famed in song, is a disappointment. The north side is occupied by a row of seventeenth-century houses turned into shops and third-rate cafés. On the east is a modern post-office, dirty and badly ventilated, and some half-finished Government buildings. On the west are two houses which were once of some note—the Cranenburg, from the windows of which, in olden times, the Counts of Flanders, with the lords and ladies of their Court, used to watch the tournaments and pageants for which Bruges was celebrated, and in which Maximilian was imprisoned by the burghers in 1488; and the Hôtel de Bouchoute, a narrow, square building of dark red brick, with a gilded lion over the doorway. But the Cranenburg, once the 'most magnificent private residence in the Market-Place,' many years ago lost every trace of its original splendour, and is now an unattractive hostelry, the headquarters of a smoking club; while the Hôtel de Bouchoute, turned into a clothier's shop, has little to distinguish it from its commonplace neighbours. Nevertheless,

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'In the Market-Place of Bruges stands the Belfry old and brown;
Thrice consumed and thrice rebuilt, still it watches o'er the town.'

It redeems the Market-Place from mediocrity. How long ago the first belfry tower of Bruges was built is unknown, but this at least is certain, that in the year 1280 a fire, in which the ancient archives of the town perished, destroyed the greater part of an old belfry, which some suppose may have been erected in the ninth century. On two subsequent occasions, in the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, the present Belfry, erected on the ruins of the former structure, was damaged by fire: and now it stands on the south side of the Market-Place, rising 350 feet above the Halles, a massive building of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, solemn, weather-beaten, and majestic. 'For six hundred years,' it has been said, 'this Belfry has watched over the city of Bruges. It has beheld her triumphs and her failures, her glory and her shame, her prosperity and her gradual decay, and, in spite of so many vicissitudes, it is still standing to bear witness to the genius of our forefathers, to awaken memories of old times and admiration for one of the most splendid monuments of civic architecture which the Middle Ages has produced.'^[1]

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In olden times watchmen were always on duty on the Belfry to give warning if enemies approached or fire broke out in any part of the town, a constant source of danger when most of the houses were built of wood. Even in these more prosaic days the custom of keeping watch and ward unceasingly is still maintained, and if there is a fire, the alarum-bell clangs over the city. All day, from year's end to year's end, the chimes ring every quarter of an hour; and all night, too, during the wildest storms of winter, when the wind shrieks round the tower; and in summer, when the old town lies slumbering in the moonlight.

From the top of the Belfry one looks down on what is practically a mediæval city.

BRUGES

A corner of the Market on the Grand' Place.



The Market-Place seems to lose its modern aspect when seen from above; and all round there is nothing visible but houses with high-pointed gables and red roofs, intersected by canals, and streets so narrow that they appear to be mere lanes. Above these rise, sometimes from trees and gardens, churches, convents, venerable buildings, the lofty spire of Notre Dame, the tower of St. Sauveur, the turrets of the Gruthuise, the Hospital of St. John, famous for its paintings by Memlinc, the Church of Ste. Elizabeth in the grove of the Béguinage, the pinnacles of the Palais du Franc, the steep roof of the Hôtel de Ville, the dome of the Convent des Dames Anglaises, and beyond that to the east the slender tower which rises above the Guildhouse of the Archers of St. Sebastian. The walls which guarded Bruges in troublous times have disappeared, though five of the old gateways remain; but the town is still contained within the limits which it had reached at the close of the thirteenth century.

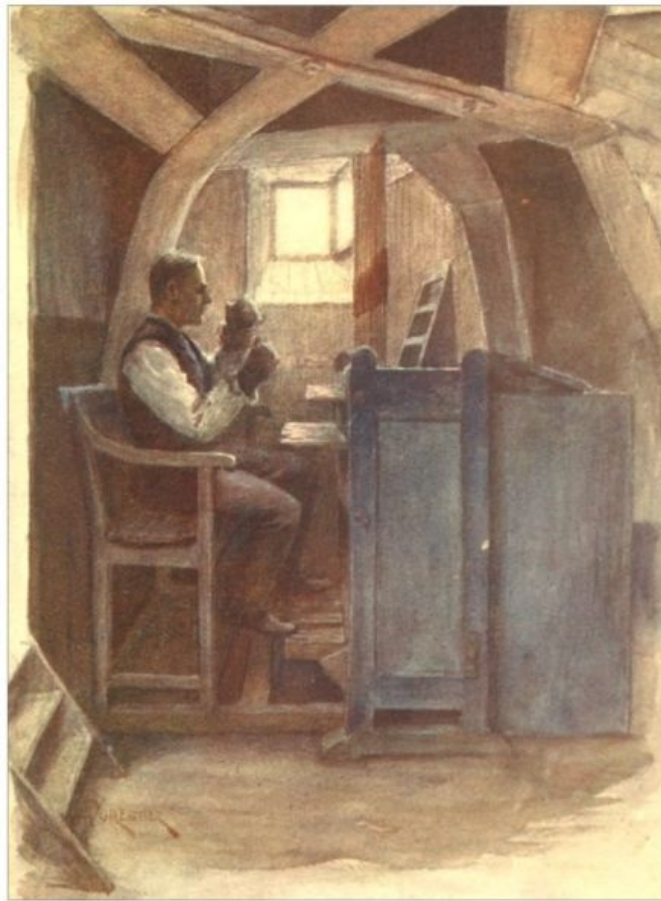
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Behind the large square of the Halles, from which the Belfry rises, is the Rue du Vieux Bourg, the street of the Ouden Burg, or old fort; and to this street the student of history must first go if he wishes to understand what tradition, more or less authentic, has to say about the earliest phases in the strange, eventful past of Bruges. The wide plain of Flanders, the northern portion of the country which we now call Belgium, was in ancient times a dreary fenland, the haunt of wild beasts and savage men; thick, impenetrable forests, tracts of barren sand, sodden marshes, covered it; and sluggish streams, some whose waters never found their way to the sea, ran through it. One of these rivulets, called the Roya, was crossed by a bridge, to defend which, according to early tradition, a fort, or 'burg,' was erected in the fourth century. This fort stood on an islet formed by the meeting of the Roya with another stream, called the Boterbeke, and a moat which joined the two. We may suppose that near the fort, which was probably a small building of rough stones, or perhaps merely a wooden stockade, a few huts were put up by people who came there for protection, and as time went on the settlement increased. 'John of Ypres, Abbot of St. Bertin,' says Mr. Robinson, 'who wrote in the fourteenth century, describes how Bruges was born and christened: "Very soon pedlars began to settle down under the walls of the fort to supply the wants of its inmates. Next came merchants, with their valuable wares. Innkeepers followed, who began to build houses, where those who could not find lodging in the fort found food and shelter. Those who thus turned away from the fort would say, 'Let us go to the bridge.' And when the houses near the bridge became so numerous as to form a town, it kept as its proper name the Flemish word *Brugge*"'

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BELL-RINGER PLAYING A CHIME



The small island on which this primitive township stood was bounded on the south and east by the Roya, on the north by the Boterbeke, and on the west by the moat joining these two streams. The Roya still flows along between the site of the old burg and an avenue of lime-trees called the Dyver till it reaches the end of the Quai du Rosaire, when it turns to the north. A short distance beyond this point it is vaulted over, and runs on beneath the streets and houses of the town. The Rue du Vieux Bourg is built over the course of the Boterbeke, which now runs under it and under the Belfry (erected on foundations sunk deep into the bed of the stream), until it joins the subterranean channel of the Roya at the south-east corner of the Market-Place. The moat which joined these two streams and guarded the west side of the island was filled up long ago, and its bed is now covered by the Rue Neuve, which connects the Rue du Vieux Bourg with the Dyver.

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Thus the boundaries of early Bruges can easily be traced; but nothing remains of the ancient buildings, though we read of a warehouse, booths, and a prison besides the dwelling-houses of the townsfolk. The elements, at least, of civic life were there; and tradition says that in or near the village, for it was nothing more, some altars of the Christian faith were set up during the seventh and eighth centuries. Trade, too, soon began to flourish, and grew rapidly as the population of the place increased. The Roya, flowing eastwards, fell into the Zwijn, an arm of the sea, which then ran up close to the town, and on which stood Damme, now a small inland village, but once a busy port crowded with shipping. The commercial life of Bruges depended on the Zwijn; and that much business was done before the close of the ninth century is shown by the fact that Bruges had then a coinage of its own.^[2] It was from such small beginnings that this famous 'Venice of the North' arose.

BRUGES

Porte d'Ostende.



FOOTNOTES

- [1] Gilliat-Smith, *The Story of Bruges*, p. 169 (Dent and Co., London, 1901). Mr. Gilliat-Smith's book is a picturesque account of Bruges in the Middle Ages. Of the English works relating to Bruges, there is nothing better than Mr. Wilfrid Robinson's *Bruges, an Historical Sketch*, a short and clear history, coming down to modern times (Louis de Plancke, Bruges, 1899).
- [2] Gilliodts van Severen, *Bruges Ancienne et Moderne*, pp. 7, 8, 9.

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CHAPTER II

BALDWIN BRAS-DE-FER—THE PLACE DU BOURG—MURDER OF CHARLES THE GOOD

TOWARDS the end of the ninth and at the beginning of the tenth century great changes took place on the banks of the Roya, and the foundations of Bruges as we know it now were laid. Just as in the memorable years 1814 and 1815 the empire of Napoleon fell into fragments, and princes and statesmen hastened to readjust the map of Europe in their own interests, so in the ninth century the empire of Charlemagne was crumbling away; and in the scramble for the spoils, the Normans carried fire and sword into Flanders. Charles the Bald, King of the Franks, at this crisis called to his aid the strong arm of Baldwin, a Flemish chief of whose ancestry we know little, but who soon became famous as Baldwin Bras-de-Fer—Baldwin of the Iron Arm, so called because, in peace or war, he was never seen without his coat of mail. This grim warrior had fallen in love with the daughter of Charles the Bald, Judith, who had been already twice married, first to the Saxon King Ethelwulf (after the death of his first wife Osberga, mother of Alfred the Great) and secondly to Ethelbald, on whose death she left England and went to live at Senlis. Baldwin persuaded the Princess to run away with him; and they were married without the knowledge of her father, to escape whose vengeance the culprits fled to Rome. Pope Nicholas I. brought about a reconciliation; and Charles not only pardoned his son-in-law, but appointed him ruler of Flanders under the title of Marquis, which was afterwards changed into that of Count. It is to the steel-clad Baldwin Bras-de-Fer that the Counts of Flanders trace the origin of their title; and he was, moreover, the real founder of that Bruges which rose to such glory in the Middle Ages, and is still, though fallen from its high estate, the picturesque capital of West Flanders, whither artists flock to wander about amidst the canals and bridges, the dismantled ramparts, the narrow streets with their curious houses, and the old buildings which bear such eloquent testimony to the ruin which long ago overtook what was once an opulent and powerful city. When the wrath of his father-in-law had been appeased, Baldwin, now responsible for the defence of Flanders, came to Bruges with his wife, and there established his Court. But the old burg, it seems, was not thought capable of holding out against the Normans, who could easily land on the banks of the Zwijn; and Baldwin, therefore, set about building a new stronghold on the east side of the old burg, and close to it. It was surrounded partly by the main stream of the Roya, and partly by backwaters flowing from it. Here he built a fortress for himself and his household, a church dedicated to St. Donatian, a prison, and a 'ghiselhuis,' or house for the safe keeping of hostages. The whole was enclosed by walls, built close to the edge of the surrounding waters.

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The Roya is now vaulted over where it ran along the west side of Baldwin's stronghold, separating it from the original burg, and the watercourses which defended it on the north and east are filled up; but the stream on the south still remains in the shape of the canal which skirts the Quai des Marbriers, from which a bridge leads by a narrow lane, called the Rue de l'Âne Aveugle, under an arch of gilded stonework, into the open space now known as the Place du Bourg. Here we are at the very heart of Bruges, on the ground where Baldwin's stronghold stood, with its four gates and drawbridges, and the high walls frowning above the homes of the townsmen clustering round them. The aspect of the place is completely changed since those early days. A grove of chestnut-trees covers the site of the Church of St. Donatian; not a stone remains of Bras-de-Fer's rude palace; and instead of the prison and the hostage-house, there are the Hôtel de Ville, now more than five hundred years old, from whose windows the Counts of Flanders swore obedience to the statutes and privileges of the town, the Palais de Justice, and the dark crypt beneath the chapel which shelters the mysterious Relic of the Holy Blood.

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BRUGES

Rue de l'Âne Aveugle (showing end of Town Hall and Bridge connecting it with Palais de Justice).



In summer it is a warm, quiet, pleasant spot. Under the shade of the trees, near the statue of Van Eyck, women selling flowers sit beside rows of geraniums, roses, lilies, pansies, which give a touch of bright colour to the scene. Artists from all parts of Europe set up their easels and paint. Young girls are gravely busy with their water-colours. Black-robed nuns and bare-footed Carmelites pass silently along. Perhaps some traveller from America opens his guide-book to study the map of a city which had risen to greatness long before Columbus crossed the seas. A few English people hurry across, and pass under the archway of the Rue de l'Âne Aveugle on the way to their tennis-ground beyond the Porte de Gand. The sunshine glitters on the gilded façade of the Palais de Justice, and lights up the statues in their niches on the front of the Hôtel de Ville. There is no traffic, no noise. Everything is still and peaceful. The chimes, ever and anon ringing out from the huge Belfry, which rises high above the housetops to the west, alone break the silence.

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This is Bruges sleeping peacefully in old age, lulled to rest by the sound of its own carillon. But it is easy, standing there, to recall the past, and to fancy the scenes which took place from time to time throughout the long period of foreign danger and internal strife. We can imagine the Bourg, now so peaceful, full of armed men, rushing to the Church of St. Donatian on the morning when Charles the Good was slain; how, in later times, the turbulent burghers, fiery partisans of rival factions, Clauwerts shouting for the Flemish Lion, and Leliarts marshalled under the Lily of France, raged and threatened; how the stones were splashed with blood on the day of the Bruges Matins, when so many Frenchmen perished; or what shouts were raised when the Flemish host came back victorious from the Battle of the Golden Spurs.

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Though every part of Bruges—not only the Bourg, but the great Market-Place, and the whole maze of streets and lanes and canals of which it consists—has a story of its own, some of these stories

stand out by themselves; and amongst these one of the most dramatic is the story of the death of Charles the Good.

More than two hundred and fifty years had passed away since the coming of Baldwin Bras-de-Fer; Bruges had spread far beyond the walls of the Bourg; and Charles, who had succeeded his cousin Baldwin VII., was Count of Flanders. He was called 'the Good' because of his just rule and simple life, and still more, perhaps, because he clothed and fed the poor—not only in Bruges, but throughout all Flanders. The common people loved him, but his charities gave offence to the rich. He had, moreover, incurred the special enmity of the Erembalds, a powerful family, who, though not of noble origin themselves, were connected by marriage with many noble houses. They had supported his claim to the throne of Flanders, which had been disputed, and he had rewarded their services by heaping favours on them. But, after a time, they began to oppose the methods of government which Charles applied to Flanders. They resented most of all one of his decrees which made it unlawful for persons not in his service to carry arms in time of peace. This decree, which was pronounced in order to prevent the daily scenes of violence which Charles abhorred, was declared by the Erembalds to be an interference with Flemish liberty. It did not affect them personally, for they held office under the Count; but they none the less opposed it vehemently.

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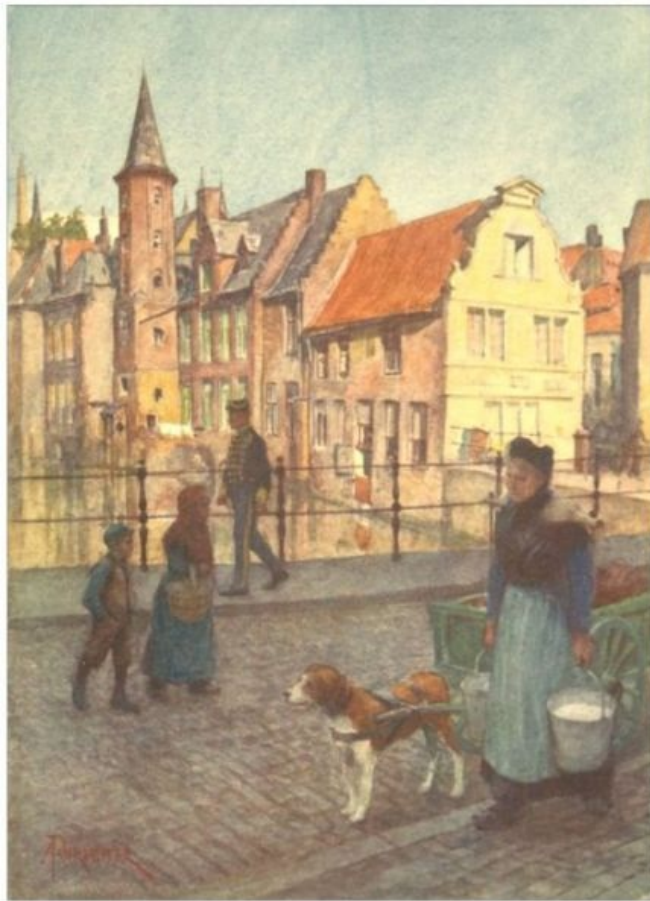
While Charles was thus on bad terms with the Erembalds, a deadly feud existed between them and the Straetens, another notable family, which grew to such a height that the rival clans made open war upon each other, pillaging, burning, and slaying after the manner of these times. Charles called the leaders of both sides before him, and made them swear to keep the peace; but when he was at Ypres in the autumn of 1126, a complaint was laid before him that Bertulf, head of the Erembalds, who was also Provost of St. Donatian's, had sent one of his nephews, Burchard by name, on a raid into the lands of the Straetens, whose cattle he had carried off. On hearing of this outrage, Charles gave orders that Burchard's house should be pulled down, and that he should compensate the Straetens for their losses. The Erembalds were powerless to resist this order, and Burchard's house was razed to the ground.

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It has been said that this was only the beginning of strong measures which Charles was about to take against the Erembalds; but there is no certainty as to what his intentions really were. He then lived in the Looove, a mansion which he had built in the Bourg at Bruges, on the site now occupied by the Palais de Justice; and there, on his return from Ypres, he had a meeting with some of the Erembalds, who had been sent to plead on behalf of Burchard. As to what took place at this interview there is some doubt. According to one account, Charles drank wine with the delegates, and granted a free pardon to Burchard, on condition that he kept the peace. According to another account, his demeanour was so unbending that the Erembalds left his presence full of angry suspicions, which they communicated to their friends. Whatever may have happened, they were bent on mischief. Burchard was sent for, and a secret consultation was held, after which Burchard and a chosen few assembled in a house on the Bourg and arranged their plans. This was on the night of March 1, 1127.

BRUGES

Quai du Rosaire.



At break of day next morning a cold, heavy mist hung low over Bruges, and in the Bourg everything was shrouded in darkness. But already some poor men were waiting in the courtyard of the Looove, to whom Charles gave alms on his way to early Mass in the Church of St. Donatian. Then he went along a private passage which led into the church, and knelt in prayer before the Lady Altar. It was his custom to give help to the needy when in church, and he had just put some money into the hands of a poor woman, when suddenly she called out: 'Beware, Sir Count!' He turned quickly round, and there, sword in hand, was Burchard, who had stolen up the dim aisle to where Charles was kneeling. The next moment Burchard struck, and Charles fell dead upon the steps of the altar. [Pg 19]

Then followed a scene of wild confusion. The woman ran out into the Bourg, calling loudly that the Count was slain. In the midst of the uproar some of the royal household fled in terror, while others who entered the church were butchered by the Erembalds, who next attacked the Looove, and, having pillaged it, rushed over Bruges, slaughtering without mercy all who dared to oppose them. [Pg 20]

After some time one of the Count's servants ventured to cover the dead body with a winding-sheet, and to surround it with lighted tapers; and there it remained lying on the pavement, until at last the Erembalds, who were afraid to bury it in Bruges lest the sight of the tomb of Charles the Good should one day rouse the townsmen to avenge his death, sent a message to Ghent, begging the Abbot of St. Peter's to take it away and bury it in his own church. The Abbot came to Bruges, and before dawn the body of the murdered Count was being stealthily carried along the aisles of St. Donatian's, when a great crowd rushed in, declaring that the bones of Charles must be allowed to rest in peace at Bruges. The arches rang with cries, chairs were overturned, stools and candlesticks were thrown about, as the people, pressing and struggling round the Abbot and his servants, told Bertulf, with many an oath, that he must yield to their wishes. At last the Provost submitted, and on the morrow, just two days after the murder, the body of Charles was buried before the Lady Altar, on the very spot, it is said, where the statue of Van Eyck now stands under the trees in the Bourg. [Pg 21]

The triumph of the Erembalds was short, for the death of Charles the Good was terribly avenged by his friends, who came to Bruges at the head of a large force. A fierce struggle took place at the Rue de l'Âne Aveugle, where many were slain. The Erembalds were driven into the Bourg, the gates of which they shut; but an entrance was forced, and, after desperate fighting, some thirty of them, all who remained alive, were compelled to take refuge, first in the nave and then in the tower of the Church of St. Donatian, where, defending themselves with the courage of despair, they made a last stand, until, worn out by fatigue and hunger, they surrendered and came down. Bertulf the Provost, Burchard, and a few of the other ringleaders had fled some days before, and so escaped, for a time at least, the fate of their companions, who, having been imprisoned in a dungeon, were taken to the top of the church tower and flung down one by one on to the stones of the Bourg. 'Their bodies,' says Mr. Gilliat-Smith, 'were thrown into a marsh beyond the village of St. André, and for years afterwards no man after nightfall would willingly pass that way.' In the Church of St. Sauveur there is a costly shrine containing what are said to be the bones of Charles the Good, taken from their first resting-place, at which twice every year a festival is held in commemoration of his virtues. [Pg 22]

CHAPTER III

THE BÉGUINAGE—CHURCHES—THE RELIC OF THE HOLY BLOOD

BRUGES is one of the most Catholic towns in Catholic Flanders. Convents and religious houses of all sorts have always flourished there, and at present there are no less than forty-five of these establishments. Probably one of the most interesting to English people is the Couvent des Dames Anglaises, which was founded in 1629 by the English Augustinian Nuns of Ste. Monica's Convent at Louvain. Its chapel, with a fine dome of the eighteenth century, contains a beautiful altar built of marbles brought from Egypt, Greece, and Persia; and amongst its possessions is the rosary of Catherine of Braganza (Queen of Charles II. of England), who died at Bruges.

And then there is the Béguinage. There are Béguinages at Amsterdam and Breda, but with this exception of Holland, Belgium is now the only country in Europe where these societies, the origin of whose name is uncertain, are to be found. They consist of spinsters or widows, who, though bound by a few conventual oaths during their connection with the society, may return to the world. On entering each sister pays a sum of money to the general funds, and at first lives for a time along with other novices. At the end of this term of probation they are at liberty to occupy one of the small dwellings within the precincts of the Béguinage, and keep house for themselves. They spend their time in sewing, making lace, educating poor children, visiting the sick, or any form of good works for which they may have a taste. They are under a Mother Superior, the 'Grande Dame,' appointed by the Bishop of the diocese, and must attend the services in the church of their Béguinage. Thus the Béguine, living generally in a house of her own, and free to reenter the world, occupies a different position from the nuns of the better-known Orders, though so long as she remains a member of her society she is bound by the vows of chastity and obedience to her ecclesiastical superiors.

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The Béguinage.



The Béguinage at Bruges, founded in the thirteenth century, is situated near the Minnewater, or Lac d'Amour, which every visitor is taken to see. This sheet of placid water, bordered by trees, which was a harbour in the busy times, is one of the prettiest bits of Bruges; and they say that if you go there at midnight, and stand upon the bridge which crosses it on the south, any wish which you may form will certainly come to pass. It is better to go alone, for strict silence is necessary to insure the working of this charm. A bridge over the water which runs from the Lac d'Amour leads through a gateway into the Béguinage, where a circle of small houses—whitewashed, with stepped gables, and green woodwork on the windows—surrounds a lawn planted with tall trees. There is a view of the spire of Notre Dame beyond the roofs, a favourite subject for the painters who come here in numbers on summer afternoons. The Church of Ste. Elizabeth, an unpretentious building, stands on one side of the lawn; and within it, many times a day, the Sisters may be seen on their knees repeating the Offices of the Church. When the service is finished they rise, remove their white head-coverings, and return demurely to their quaint little homes.

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Bruges has, needless to say, many churches, but nothing which can be compared to the

magnificent Cathedral of Antwerp, to the imposing front of Ste. Gudule at Brussels, or to the huge mass which forms such a conspicuous landmark for several leagues round Malines. Still, some of the churches are not without interest: the Cathedral of St. Sauveur, where the stalls of the Knights of the Order of the Golden Fleece, which was founded at Bruges, are to be seen in the choir, and over one of them the arms of Edward IV. of England; the curious little Church of Jerusalem, with its 'Holy Sepulchre,' an exact copy of the traditionary grave in Palestine—a dark vault, entered by a passage so low that one must crawl through it, and where a light burns before a figure which lies there wrapped in a linen cloth; and the Church of Notre Dame, which contains some treasures, such as a lovely white marble statue of the Virgin and Child, from the chisel of Michael Angelo; the tombs of Charles the Bold of Burgundy and his daughter—the 'Gentle Mary,' whose untimely death at Bruges in 1482, after a short married life, saved her from witnessing the misfortunes which clouded the last years of her husband, the Archduke Maximilian; and a portion of the Holy Cross, which came to Bruges in the fifteenth century. The story goes that a rich merchant, a Dutchman from Dordrecht, Schoutteeten by name, who lived at Bruges, was travelling through Syria in the year 1380. One day, when journeying with a caravan, he saw a man hiding something in a wood, and, following him, discovered that it was a box, which he suspected might contain something valuable. Mijnheer Schoutteeten appropriated the box, and carried it home from Syria to Dordrecht, where a series of miracles began to occur of such a nature as to make it practically certain that the box (or some wood which it contained, for on this point the legend is vague) was a part of the true Cross! In course of time Schoutteeten died in the odour of sanctity, having on his death-bed expressed a wish that the wood which he had brought from the East should be given to the Church of Notre Dame at Bruges. His widow consoled herself by taking a second husband, who, Uutenhove by name, fulfilled the pious request of his predecessor, and thus another relic was added to the large collection which is preserved in the various churches and religious houses of Bruges. It was brought to Flanders in the year 1473, and must have been a source of considerable revenue to the Church since then.

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The buildings of Notre Dame, with the well-known Gruthuise Mansion which adjoins them, and the singularly graceful spire, higher than the Belfry tower, rising from the exquisite portico called 'Het Paradijs,' form a very beautiful group; but, with this exception, there is nothing remarkable about the churches of Bruges. One of them, however, has a peculiar interest—the Chapelle du Saint-Sang, which stands in the Place du Bourg in the corner next to the Hôtel de Ville. It is built in two stories. The lower, a dark, solemn chapel, like a crypt, was dedicated to St. Basil at an early period, and is one of the oldest buildings in Bruges. The greater part of the upper story does not date further back than the fifteenth century. But it is not the fabric itself, venerable though that is, but what it contains, that makes this place the Holy of Holies in the religious life of Bruges; for here, in a costly shrine of gold and silver adorned with precious stones, they guard the wonderful relic which was brought from Palestine in the time of the Crusaders by Thierry d'Alsace, Count of Flanders, and which is still worshipped by thousands of devout believers every year.

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Thierry d'Alsace, the old chroniclers tell us, visited the Holy Land four times, and was the leader of the Flemish warriors who, roused by the eloquence of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, joined the second Crusade in the summer of 1147. He had married Sybilla, sister of Baldwin, King of Jerusalem; and when the time came for his return to Europe, his brother-in-law and the Patriarch of Jerusalem resolved to reward his services by giving him a part of the most valuable relic which the Church in Palestine possessed, which was a small quantity of a red liquid, said to be blood and water, which, according to immemorial tradition, Joseph of Arimathea had preserved after he had washed the dead body of Jesus.

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The earlier history of this relic is unknown, and is as obscure as that of the other 'Relics of the Holy Blood' which are to be found in various places. But there can be no doubt whatever that in the twelfth century the Christians at Jerusalem believed that it had been in existence since the day of the Crucifixion. It was, therefore, presented to Thierry with great solemnity in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre during the Christmas festivals of 1148. The Patriarch, having displayed the vessel which contained it to the people, divided the contents into two portions, one of which he poured into a small vial, the mouth of which was carefully sealed up and secured with gold wire. This vessel was next enclosed in a crystal tube, shut at the ends with golden stoppers, to which a chain of silver was attached. Then the Patriarch gave the tube to Baldwin, from whose hands Thierry, kneeling on the steps of the altar, received it with profound emotion.^[3]

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The Count, however, did not think his hands, which had shed so much human blood, worthy to convey the relic home; and he entrusted it to Leonius, chaplain of the Flemish Army, who hung it round his neck, and so carried it to Bruges, where he arrived in May, 1150, along with Thierry, who, mounted on a white horse led by two barefooted monks, and holding the relic in his hand, was conducted in state to the Bourg, where he deposited the precious object in the Chapel of St. Basil, which is commonly known as the Chapel of the Holy Blood.

After some time the relic was found to be dry, but, strange to say, it became liquid, we are told upon the authority of Pope Clement V., every Friday, 'usually at six o'clock.' This weekly miracle continued till about the year 1325. Since then it has never taken place except once, in 1388, when the vial containing the relic was being transferred to a new crystal tube; and on this occasion William, Bishop of Ancona, was astonished to see the relic turning redder than usual, and some drops, as of newly-shed blood, flowing within the vial, which he was holding in his hand. Many notable persons who were present, one of them the Bishop of Lincoln, testified to this event!

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Other miracles wrought through the agency of this relic are recorded. A child which had been born dead was taken to the shrine, and came to life after three days. A young girl who had suffered for twenty months from an issue of blood, and for whom the doctors could do nothing, was cured by the application of a piece of cloth which had been used to cover the relic. Another girl who had

been paralyzed for a long time, being carried into the Chapel of St. Basil, was restored to complete strength the moment she kissed the crystal tube. In December, 1689, a fire broke out in the Bourg, and threatened to destroy the Hôtel de Ville; but a priest brought forth the tube containing the relic, and held it up before the flames, which were instantly extinguished. These and many other similar miracles, confirmed by the oath of witnesses and received by the Church at the present day as authentic, make the relic an object of profound devotion to the people of Bruges and the peasants of the surrounding country, who go in crowds to bow before it twice every Friday, when it is exhibited for public worship.

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It was nearly lost on several occasions in the days of almost constant war, and during the French Revolution it was concealed for some years in the house of a private citizen. The Chapel of St. Basil suffered from the disturbed condition of the country, and when Napoleon came to Bruges in 1810 it was such a complete wreck that the magistrates were on the point of sweeping it away altogether. But Napoleon saved it, declaring that when he looked on the ruins he fancied himself once more amongst the antiquities of Egypt, and that to destroy them would be a crime. Four years after the Battle of Waterloo the relic was brought out from its hiding-place, and in 1856 the chapel was restored from the designs of two English architects, William Brangwyn and Thomas Harper King.^[4]

On the first Monday after the 2nd of May every year the town of Bruges is full of strangers, who have come to witness the celebrated 'Procession of the Holy Blood,' which there is good reason to believe has taken place annually (except during the French Revolution) for the last 755 years.

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Very early in the day a Mass is celebrated in the Upper Chapel of the Holy Blood, which is crowded to the doors. In the crypt, or lower chapel, where many people are kneeling before the sacred images, the gloom, the silence, the bent figures dimly seen in the faint yellow light of a few tapers, make up a weird scene all the morning till about nine o'clock, when the relic, in its 'châsse,' or tabernacle, is carried to the Cathedral of St. Sauveur, and placed on the high altar, while a pontifical Mass is celebrated by one of the Bishops. When that is done, the procession starts on its march along the chief thoroughfares of the town. The houses are decorated with flags, and candles burn in almost every window. Through the narrow streets, between crowds of people standing on the pavements or looking down from the windows, while the church bells ring and wreaths of incense fill the air, bands of music, squadrons of cavalry, crucifixes, shrines, images, the banners of the parishes and the guilds, heralds in their varied dresses, bareheaded pilgrims from England, France, and other countries, pages, maidens in white, bearing palms, or crowns of thorn, or garlands, priests with relics, acolytes and chanting choristers, pass slowly along. The buffoonery of the Middle Ages, when giants, ballet-dancers, and mythological characters figured in the scene, has been abandoned; but Abraham and Isaac, King David and King Solomon, Joseph and the Virgin Mary, the Magi, and many saints and martyrs, walk in the long procession, which is closed by the Bishops and clergy accompanying the gorgeous shrine containing the small tube of something red like blood, before which all the people sink to the ground, and remain kneeling till it has passed.

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The proceedings of the day end with a benediction at an altar erected in front of the Hôtel de Ville. The Bourg is filled from side to side with those who have taken part in the procession, and by thousands of spectators who have followed them from all parts of the town to witness the closing scene. The crowd gathers under the trees and along the sides of the square, the centre of which, occupied by the processionists, is a mass of colour, above which the standards and images which have been carried through the streets rise against the dark background of the Hôtel de Ville and the Chapel of the Holy Blood. The relic is taken out of the châsse, and a priest, standing on the steps of the altar high above the crowd, holds it up to be worshipped. Everyone bows low, and then, in dead silence, the mysterious object is carried into the chapel, and with this the chief religious ceremony of the year at Bruges is brought to a close.

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There are sights in Bruges that night, within a stone's-throw of the Chapel of the Holy Blood, which are worth seeing, they contrast so strangely with all this fervour of religion.

The curtain has fallen upon the drama of the day. The flags are furled and put aside. The vestments are in the sacristy. Shrines, canopies, censers, all the objects carried in the procession, have disappeared into the churches. The church doors are locked, and the images are left to stand all night without so much as one solitary worshipper kneeling before them. The Bourg is empty and dark, steeped in black shadows at the door of the chapel where the relic has been laid to rest. It is all quiet there, but a stroll through the Rue de l'Âne Aveugle and across the canal by the bridge which leads to the purlieu of the fish-markets brings one upon another scene. Every second house, if not every house, is a café, 'herberg,' or 'estaminet,' with a bar and sanded floor and some rough chairs and tables; and on the night of the Procession of the Holy Blood they are crowded to the doors. Peasants from the country are there in great force. For some days before and after the sacred festival the villagers are in the habit of coming into Bruges—whole families of them, father and mother, sons and daughters, all in their best finery. They walk through the streets, following the route by which the Holy Blood is carried, telling their beads and saying their prayers, crossing themselves, and kneeling at any image of Christ, or Madonna, or saint, which they may notice at the street corners. It is curious to watch their sunburnt faces and uncouth ways as they slouch along, their hands busy with their beads, and their lips never ceasing for a moment to mutter prayer after prayer. They follow in the wake of the Procession of the Holy Blood, or wait to fall upon their knees when it passes and receive the blessing of the Bishop, who walks with fingers raised, scattering benedictions from side to side. In the evening, before starting for home, they go to the cafés.

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As evening passes into night the sounds of music and dancing are heard. At the doors people sit

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drinking round tables placed on the pavement or in the rank, poisonous gutter. The hot air is heavy with the smell of decayed fish. Inside the cafés men and women, old and young, are dancing in the fetid atmosphere to jingling pianos or accordions. The heat, the close, sour fumes of musty clothing, tobacco, beer, gin, fried fish, and unwashed humanity, are overpowering. There are disgusting sights in all directions. Fat women, with red, perspiring faces and dirty fingers, still clutching their rosaries; tawdry girls, field-workers, with flushed faces, dancing with country lads, most of whom are more than half tipsy; ribald jokes and laughter and leering eyes; reeling, drunken men; maudlin affection in one corner, and jealous disputing in another; crying babies; beer and gin spilt on the tables; and all sorts of indecency and hideous details which Swift might have gloated over or Hogarth painted.

This is how the day of the Holy Blood procession is finished by many of the countryfolk. The brutal cabaret comes after the prayers and adoration of the morning! It is a world of contrasts. But soon the lights are out, the shutters are put up, the last customer goes staggering homewards, and the Belfry speaks again, as it spoke when the sweet singer lay dreaming at the Fleur-de-Blé:

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'In the ancient town of Bruges,
In the quaint old Flemish city,
As the evening shades descended,
Low and loud and sweetly blended,
Low at times and loud at times,
And changing like a poet's rhymes,
Rang the beautiful wild chimes
From the Belfry in the market
Of the ancient town of Bruges.
Then, with deep sonorous clangour,
Calmly answering their sweet anger,
When the wrangling bells had ended,
Slowly struck the clock eleven,
And, from out the silent heaven,
Silence on the town descended.
Silence, silence everywhere,
On the earth and in the air,
Save that footsteps here and there
Of some burgher home returning,
By the street lamps faintly burning,
For a moment woke the echoes
Of the ancient town of Bruges.'

BRUGES

Quai des Marbriers.



FOOTNOTES

- [3] Canon van Haecke, *Le Précieux Sang à Bruges* (fourth edition), pp. 95, 96.
[4] Gilliat-Smith, *The Story of Bruges*, p. 103.

THE BRUGES MATINS—BATTLE OF THE GOLDEN SPURS

THE visitor to Bruges is reminded, wherever he goes, of the stirring events which fill the chronicles of the town for several centuries. Opposite the Belfry, in the middle of the Market-Place, is the monument to Peter De Coninck and John Breidel, on which garlands of flowers are laid every summer, in memory of what they did when the burghers rose against the French in May, 1302; and amongst the modern frescoes which cover the walls of the Grande Salle des Échevins in the Hôtel de Ville, with its roof of fourteenth-century woodwork, is one which represents the return from the Battle of the Golden Spurs, that famous fight in which the hardy peasantry of Flanders overthrew the knights of France whom Philip the Fair had sent to avenge the blood of the Frenchmen who had died on the terrible morning of the 'Bruges Matins.'

The fourteenth century had opened. The town had now reached the limits which have contained it ever since—an irregular oval with a circumference of between four and five miles, surrounded by double ditches, and a strong wall pierced by nine fortified gateways; and as the town had grown, the privileges and liberties of the townsmen had grown likewise. Sturdy, independent, and resolved to keep the management of their own affairs in their own hands, the burghers of Bruges, like those of the other Flemish towns, had succeeded in establishing a system of self-government so complete that it roused the opposition of Guy de Dampierre, Count of Flanders, whose efforts to diminish the power of these communities at length brought about a crisis which gave Philip the Fair of France an excuse for interfering. The Count, having to contend both against his own subjects and against the ambitions of the King of France, fell from power, and in the end Flanders was annexed to France.

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Soon after this rich province had been added to his domains, Philip came with his wife, Joanna of Navarre, on a visit to Bruges. Already there were two factions in the town—the Leliarts, or French party, consisting chiefly of the upper classes, and the Clauwerts, or Flemish party, to which the mass of the people belonged. By the former Philip was received in royal fashion, and so magnificent were the dresses and jewels worn by the wives and daughters of the nobles and rich burgesses, who sat in the windows and balconies as the royal procession passed along, that the Queen was moved to jealousy. 'I thought,' she said, 'that I alone was Queen; but here in this place I have six hundred rivals.' But in the streets below there were sullen looks and murmurs of discontent, which grew louder and louder every day, when, after the departure of the Court, the magistrates, who belonged to the French party, proposed that the merchant guilds should find money to defray some of the expenses which had been incurred on this occasion.

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At this time Peter De Coninck was Dean of the Guild of Weavers, a man of substance, popular and eloquent. There was a tumultuous gathering in the Market-Place, when, standing in front of the Belfry, with the leaders of five-and-twenty guilds around him, he declaimed on liberty, and attacked the magistrates, calling on his fellow-townsmen to resist the taxes. The city officers, on the order of the magistrates, arrested De Coninck and his chief supporters, and hurried them to the prison in the Bourg. But in a few hours the mob forced an entrance and released them. The signal for revolt had been given, and for some months Bruges, like the rest of Flanders, was in disorder. De Coninck, who had been joined by John Breidel, Dean of the Guild of Butchers, was busy rousing the people in all parts of the country. He visited Ghent, amongst other places, and tried to persuade the magistrates that if Ghent and Bruges united their forces the whole Flemish people would rise, crush the Leliarts, and expel the French. But the men of Ghent would not listen to him, and he returned to Bruges. Here, too, he met with a rebuff, for the magistrates, having heard that Jacques de Châtillon, whom Philip had made Governor of Flanders, was marching on the town, would not allow him to remain amongst them. He went to Damme, and with him went, not only Breidel, but 5,000 burghers of the national party, stout Clauwerts, who had devoted themselves to regaining the liberty of their country.

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A FLEMISH YOUNG WOMAN



When Châtillon rode up to the walls of Bruges and demanded entrance the magistrates agreed to open the gates, on condition that he brought with him only 300 men-at-arms. But he broke his word, and the town was entered by 2,000 knights, whose haughty looks and threatening language convinced the people that treachery was intended. It was whispered in the Market-Place that the waggons which rumbled over the drawbridges carried ropes with which the Clauwerts who had remained in the town were to be hanged; that there was to be a general massacre, in which not even the women and children would be spared; and that the Frenchmen never unbuckled their swords or took off their armour, but were ready to begin the slaughter at any moment. It was a day of terror in Bruges, and when evening came some of the burghers slipped out, made their way to Damme, and told De Coninck what was passing in the town.

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That night Châtillon gave a feast to his chief officers, and amongst his guests was Pierre Flotte, Chancellor of France, perhaps the ablest of those jurists by whose evil councils Philip the Fair was encouraged in the ideas of autocracy which led him to make the setting up of a despotism the policy of his whole life. With Flotte—'that Belial,' as Pope Boniface VIII. once called him—and the rest, Châtillon sat revelling till a late hour. The night wore on; De Châtillon's party broke up, and went to rest; the weary sentinels were half asleep at their posts; and soon all Bruges was buried in silence. Here and there lights twinkled in some of the guild-houses, where a few of the burghers sat anxiously waiting for what the morrow might bring forth, while others went to the ramparts on the north, and strained their eyes to see if help was coming from Damme.

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At early dawn—it was Friday, May 18, 1302—the watchers on the ramparts saw a host of armed men rapidly approaching the town. They were divided into two parties, one of which, led by De Coninck, made for the Porte Ste. Croix, while the other, under Breidel, marched to the Porte de Damme, a gateway which no longer exists, but which was then one of the most important entrances, being that by which travellers came from Damme and Sluis. Messengers from the ramparts ran swiftly through the streets, in which daylight was now beginning to appear, and spread the news from house to house. Silently the burghers took their swords and pikes, left their homes, and gathered in the Market-Place and near the houses in which the French were sleeping. The French slept on till, all of a sudden, they were wakened by the tramp of feet, the clash of arms, and shouts of 'Flanders for the Lion!' Breidel had led his men into the town, and they were rushing through the streets to where Châtillon had taken up his quarters, while De Coninck, having passed through the Porte Ste. Croix, was marching to the Bourg. The Frenchmen, bewildered, surprised, and only half awake, ran out into the streets. The Flemings were shouting 'Schilt ende Vriendt! Schilt ende Vriendt!' and every man who could not pronounce these words was known to be a Frenchman, and slain upon the spot. Some fled to the gates; but at every gate they found a band of guards, who called out 'Schilt ende Vriendt!' and put them to the sword.

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All that summer's morning, and on throughout the day, the massacre continued. Old men, women, and children hurled stones from the roofs and windows down upon the enemy. Breidel, a man of great strength, killed many with his own hand, and those whom he wounded were beaten to death where they fell by the apprentices with their iron clubs. In the Market-Place, close to where the monument to De Coninck and Breidel stands, a party of soldiers, under a gallant French knight, Gauthier de Sapignies, made a stand; but they were overpowered and slaughtered to the last man.

Châtillon tried to rally his forces, but the surprise had been too complete, and, disguising himself in the cassock of a priest, he hid, in company with Chancellor Flotte, till it was dark, when they managed to escape from the town. By this time the carnage had ceased; the walls of the houses and the gutters ran with blood; and the burghers of Bruges had done their work so thoroughly that 2,000 Frenchmen lay dead upon the streets.

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But the final reckoning with France was yet to come. When Châtillon reached Paris and told his master the direful story of the Bruges Matins, Philip swore revenge; and a few weeks later an army 40,000 strong invaded Flanders, under the Comte d'Artois, with whom rode also Châtillon, Flotte, and many nobles of France. The Flemings went to meet them—not only the burghers of Bruges, led by De Coninck and Breidel, marching under the banners of their guilds, but men from every part of Flanders—and on July 11, near Courtrai, the Battle of the Golden Spurs was fought.

A FLEMISH BURGHER



The ground was marshy, with a stream and pools of water between the two armies; and just as the Scots at Bannockburn, twelve years afterwards, prepared pitfalls for the heavy cavalry of England, so the Flemings laid a trap for the French knights by cutting down brushwood and covering the water. The horsemen, clad in cumbrous armour, charged, the brushwood gave way, and most of them sank into the water. The Comte d'Artois got clear, but was beaten to the ground and killed. The Chancellor Flotte, who had boasted that he would bring the people of Bruges to their knees, was trampled to death. Châtillon died too; and when, at last, a long day's fighting came to an end, the Flemings had gained a complete victory. By this battle, which took its name from the thousands of golden spurs which were torn from the French knights who fell, the victors secured—for a time, at least—the liberty of their country, and the memory of it was for many a day to Flanders what the memory of Bannockburn was to Scotland or of Morgarten to Switzerland.

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FOOTNOTES

[5] 'Shield and Friend!'

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CHAPTER V DAMME—THE SEA-FIGHT AT SLUIS—SPLENDOUR OF BRUGES IN THE MIDDLE AGES—

THE FALL AND LOSS OF TRADE

DAMME, where the patriots mustered on the eve of the Bruges Matins, is within a short hour's stroll from the east end of the town. The Roya, which disappears from view, as we have already seen, opposite the Quai du Rosaire, emerges from its hidden course at the west end of the Quai du Miroir, where the statue of Jan van Eyck stands near the door of the building now used as a public library. This building was once the Customs House of Bruges, conveniently situated in the neighbourhood of the Market-Place, and on the side of the Roya, which thence stretches eastwards between the Quai du Miroir and the Quai Spinola for a few hundred yards, and then turns sharply to the north, and continues between the Quai Long and the Quai de la Potterie, which are built in rambling fashion on either side of the water. Some of the houses are old, others of no earlier date, apparently, than the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries; some large and well preserved, and some mere cottages, half ruinous, with low gables and faded yellow fronts, huddled together on the rough causeway, alongside of which are moored canal-boats with brown hulls and deck-houses gay with white and green paint. At the end of the Quai de la Potterie is the modern Bassin de Commerce, in which the Roya loses itself, the harbour for the barges and small steamers which come by the canal connecting Ostend with Bruges and Ghent; and near this was, in ancient days, the Porte de Damme, through which Breidel and his followers burst on that fateful morning in May 600 years ago.

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To the right of the Bassin a broad canal, constructed by Napoleon in 1810, extends in a straight line eastwards, contained within dykes which raise it above a wide expanse of level meadow-lands intersected by ditches, and dotted here and there by the white-walled cottages with red roofs and green outside shutters which are so typical of Flemish scenery. About two miles out of Bruges one comes in sight of a windmill perched on a slope at the side of the canal, a square church-tower, a few houses, and some grassy mounds, which were once strong fortifications. Even the historical imagination, which everyone who walks round Bruges must carry with him, is hardly equal to realizing that this was once a bustling seaport, with a harbour in which more than a hundred merchant ships, laden with produce from all parts of the world, were sometimes lying at the same time. In those busy times Damme, they say, contained 50,000 inhabitants; now there are only about 1,100.

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Beyond Damme the canal winds on through the same flat landscape, low-lying, water-logged, with small farmhouses and scanty trees, and in the distance, on the few patches of higher ground, the churches of Oostkerke and Westcapelle. At last, soon after passing the Dutch frontier, the canal ends in a little dock with gray, lichen-covered sides; and this is Sluis, a dull place, with a few narrow streets, a market-place, two churches, and a belfry of the fourteenth century. It is quite inland now, miles from the salt water; and from the high ramparts which still surround it the view extends to the north across broad green fields, covering what was once the bed of the sea, in the days when the tide ebbed and flowed in the channel of the Zwijn, over which ships passed sailing on their way to Bruges. But any English traveller who, having gone a little way out of the beaten track of summer tourists, may chance to mount the ramparts, and look down upon the fields which stretch away to the shores of the North Sea and the estuary of the Scheldt, and inland beyond Damme to the Belfry and the spires of Bruges, is gazing on the scene of a great event in the naval history of England.

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Here, on what is now dry land, on the morning of June 24, 1340, 800 ships of war, full of armed men—35,000 of them—were drawn up in line of battle; and further out to sea, beyond the entrance of the Zwijn, the newly-risen sun was shining on the sails of another fleet which was manœuvring in the offing.

BRUGES Quai du Miroir.



'In the cities of Flanders,' says Dr. Gardiner, 'had arisen manufacturing populations which supplied the countries round with the products of the loom. To the Ghent and Bruges of the Middle Ages England stood in the same relation as that which the Australian colonies hold to the Leeds and Bradford of our own day. The sheep which grazed over the wide, unenclosed pasture-lands of our island formed a great part of the wealth of England, and that wealth depended entirely on the flourishing trade with the Flemish towns in which English wool was converted into cloth.' When, therefore, Edward III. claimed the throne of France, and the Hundred Years' War began, it was of vital importance to the trade of Flanders and England that the merchants of the two countries should maintain friendly relations with each other. But Philip of Valois had persuaded the Count of Flanders, Louis de Nevers, to order the arrest of all the English in Flanders, and Edward had retaliated by arresting all the Flemings who were in England, and forbidding the export of English wool to Flanders. The result was that the weavers of Bruges and the other manufacturing towns of Flanders found themselves on the road to ruin; and, having no interest in the question at issue between the Kings of France and England, apart from its effect on their commercial prosperity, the burghers of Bruges, Ghent, and Ypres, under the leadership of the famous Jacob van Artevelde (anticipating, as one of the modern historians of Bruges has noticed, what the Great Powers did for Belgium in 1830^[6]), succeeded in securing, with the assent of Philip, the neutrality of Flanders. The French King, however, did not keep faith with the Flemings, but proceeded to acts of aggression against them, and a league against France was formed between England and Flanders.

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In June, 1340, Edward, who was then in England, hearing that an immense number of French ships of war were at anchor in the Zwiijn, set sail to give them battle with a squadron of 300 vessels. The English fleet anchored off the coast between Blankenberghe and Heyst on the evening of June 23, and from the top of the dunes the English scouts saw in the distance the masts of the French ships in the Zwiijn.

As soon as there was light next morning, the English weighed anchor and sailed along the coast to the east; past lonely yellow sands, which have swarmed during recent years with workmen toiling at the construction of the immense harbour of See-Brugge, which is to be the future port of Bruges; past what was then the small fishing hamlet of Heyst; past a range of barren dunes, amongst which to-day Duinbergen, the latest of the Flemish watering-places, with its spacious hotel and trim villas, is being laid out; past a waste of storm-swept sand and rushes, on which are now the digue of Knocke, a cluster of hotels and crowded lodging-houses, and a golf-course; and so onwards till they opened the mouth of the Zwiijn, and saw the French ships crowding the entrance, 'their masts appearing to be like a great wood,' and beyond them the walls of Sluis rising from the wet sands left by the receding tide.

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It was low-water, and while waiting for the turn of the tide the English fleet stood out to sea for some time, so that Nicholas Béhuchet, the French Admiral, began to flatter himself that King Edward, finding himself so completely outnumbered, would not dare to risk fighting against such odds. The odds, indeed, were nearly three to one against the English seamen; but as soon as the tide began to flow they steered straight into the channel, and, Edward leading the van, came to close quarters, ship to ship. The famous archers of England, who six years later were to do such execution at Crécy lined the bulwarks, and poured in a tempest of arrows so thick that men fell

from the tops of the French ships like leaves before a storm. The first of the four lines in which Béhuchet had drawn up his fleet was speedily broken, and the English, brandishing their swords and pikes, boarded the French ships, drove their crews overboard, and hoisted the flag of England. King Edward was wounded, and the issue may have been doubtful, when suddenly more ships, coming from the North of England, appeared in sight, and hordes of Flemings from all parts of Flanders, from the coast, and even from inland towns so far away as Ypres,^[7] came swarming in boats to join in the attack. This decided the fate of the great battle, which continued till sunset. When it ended, the French fleet had ceased to exist, with the exception of a few ships which escaped when it was dark. The Flemings captured Béhuchet, and hung him then and there. Nearly 30,000 of his men perished, many of whom were drowned while attempting to swim ashore, or were clubbed to death by the Flemings who lined the beach, waiting to take vengeance on the invaders for having burned their homesteads and carried off their flocks. The English lost two ships and 4,000 men; but the victory was so complete that no courtier was bold enough to carry the news to King Philip, who did not know what had befallen his great fleet till the Court jester went to him, and said, 'Oh! the English cowards! the English cowards! they had not the courage to jump into the sea as our noble Frenchmen did at Sluis.'

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It is strange to think that Flemish peasants work, and cattle feed, and holiday visitors from Knocke, or Sluis, or Kadzand ramble about dry-shod where the waves were rolling in on that midsummer's morning, and that far beneath the grass the timbers of so many stout ships and the bones of so many valiant seamen have long since mouldered away. And it is also strange to think, when wandering along the canals of Bruges, where now the swans glide silently about in the almost stagnant water which laps the basements of the old houses, how in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries ships of every nation carried in great bales of merchandise, and that rich traders stored them in warehouses and strong vaults, which are now mere coal-cellars, or the dark and empty haunts of the rats which swarm in the canals.

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'There is,' says Mr. Robinson, 'in the National Library at Paris a list of the kingdoms and cities which sent their produce to Bruges at that time. England sent wool, lead, tin, coal, and cheese; Ireland and Scotland, chiefly hides and wool; Denmark, pigs; Russia, Hungary, and Bohemia, large quantities of wax; Poland, gold and silver; Germany, wine; Liége, copper kettles; and Bulgaria, furs.' After naming many parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa, that sent goods, the manuscript adds: 'And all the aforesaid realms and regions send their merchants with wares to Flanders, besides those who come from France, Poitou, and Gascony, and from the three islands of which we know not the names of their kingdoms.' The trade of Bruges was enormous. People flocked there from all quarters.

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'Lombard and Venetian merchants with deep-laden argosies;
Ministers from twenty nations; more than royal pomp and ease.'

We read of 150 ships entering in one day, and of German merchants buying 2,600 pieces of cloth, made by Flemish weavers, in a morning's marketing. A citizen of Bruges was always at the head of the Hanseatic League, and maintained the rights of that vast commercial society under the title of 'Comte de la Hanse.' Merchant princes, members of the Hanse, lived here in palaces. Money-changers grew rich. Edward III. borrowed from the Bardi at Bruges on the security of the Crown jewels of England. Contracts of insurance against maritime risks were entered into from an early period, and the merchant shipping code which regulated traffic by sea was known as the 'Röles de Damme.'^[8] There were twenty consulates at one time in Bruges, and the population of the town is said, though it is difficult to believe that this is not an exaggeration, to have been more than 200,000 before the middle of the fourteenth century.

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Six years after the Battle of Sluis, Louis of Nevers was killed at Crecy, and his son, Louis of Maele, reigned in his stead as Count of Flanders. He was a Leliart to the core, and his reign of nearly forty years, one long struggle against the liberties of his people, witnessed the capture of Bruges by Philip van Artevelde, the invasion of Flanders by the French, the defeat of the Nationalists, and the death of Van Artevelde on the field of Roosebeke. Nevertheless, during this period and after it Bruges grew in beauty and in wealth. The Hôtel de Ville, without the grandeur of the Hôtel de Ville at Brussels, but still a gem of mediæval architecture, was built on the site of the old 'Ghiselhuis' of Baldwin Bras-de-Fer. Other noble buildings, rich in design and beautiful in all their outlines, and great mansions, with marble halls and ceilings of exquisitely carved woodwork, rose on every side; towers and pinnacles, shapely windows and graceful arches, overhung the waterways; luxury increased; in the homes of the nobles and wealthy merchants were stores of precious stones, tapestries, silk, fine linen, cloth of gold; and the churches and many buildings gleamed with gilded stone and tinted glass and brilliant frescoes. Art flourished as the town grew richer. The elder and the younger Van Eyck, Gerard David, and Memlinc, with many others before and after them, were attracted by its splendour, as modern painters have been attracted by its decay; and though the 'Adoration of the Immaculate Lamb' hangs in the choir of St. Bavon at Ghent, the genius which coloured that matchless altar-piece found its inspiration within the walls of Bruges.

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The history of Bruges for many long years, especially under the rule of the House of Burgundy, was, in the midst of war, turmoil, and rebellion, the history of continuous progress. But all this prosperity depended on the sea. So long as the Zwiijn remained open, neither war nor faction, not even the last great rising against the Archduke Maximilian, which drove away the foreign merchants, most of whom went to Antwerp, and so impoverished the town that no less than 5,000 houses were standing empty in the year 1405,^[9] could have entirely ruined Bruges. These disasters might have been retrieved if the channel of communication with Damme and Sluis had not been lost; but for a long time the condition of this important waterway had been the cause of grave anxiety to the people of Bruges. The heavy volume of water which poured with every ebbing

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tide down the Scheldt between Flushing and Breskens swept past the island of Walcheren, and spread out into the North Sea and down the English Channel, leaving the mud it carried with it on the sands round the mouth of the Zwijn, which itself did not discharge a current strong enough to prevent the slow but sure formation of a bank across its entrance. Charters, moreover, had been granted to various persons, under which they drained the adjoining lands, and gradually reclaimed large portions from the sea. The channel, at no time very deep, became shallower, narrower, and more difficult of access, until at last, during the second half of the fifteenth century, the passage between Sluis and Damme was navigable only by small ships. Soon the harbour at Damme was nearly choked up with sand. Many schemes were tried in the hope of preserving the Zwijn, but the sea-trade of Bruges dwindled away to a mere nothing, and finally disappeared before the middle of the sixteenth century. And so Bruges fell from greatness. There are still some traces of the ancient bed of the Zwijn amongst the fields near Coolkerke, a village a short distance to the north of Bruges—a broad ditch with broken banks, and large pools of slimy water lying desolate and forlorn in a wilderness of tangled bushes. These are now the only remains of the highway by which the 'deep-laden argosies' used to enter in the days of old.

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FOOTNOTES

- [6] Robinson, *Bruges, an Historical Sketch*, p. 107.
- [7] Vereecke, *Histoire Militaire de la Ville d'Ypres*, p. 36.
- [8] Gilliodts van Severen, *Bruges Ancienne et Moderne*, p. 14.
- [9] Gilliodts van Severen, p. 25.

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CHAPTER VI 'BRUGES LA MORTE'

THEY call it 'Bruges la Morte,' and at every turn there is something to remind us of the deadly blight which fell upon the city when its trade was lost. The faded colours, the timeworn brickwork, the indescribable look of decay which, even on the brightest morning, throws a shade of melancholy over the whole place, lead one to think of some aged dame, who has 'come down in the world,' wearing out the finery of better days. It is all very sad and pathetic, but strangely beautiful, and the painter never lived who could put on canvas the mellow tints with which Time has clothed these old walls, and thus veiled with tender hand the havoc it has made. To stand on the bridge which crosses the canal at the corner of the Quai des Marbriers and the Quai Vert, where the pinnacles of the Palais du Franc and the roof of the Hôtel de Ville, with the Belfry just showing above them, and dull red walls rising from the water, make up a unique picture of still-life, is to read a sermon in stones, an impressive lesson in history.

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The loss of trade brought Bruges face to face with the 'question of the unemployed' in a very aggravated form. How to provide for the poor became a most serious problem, and so many of the people were reduced to living on charity that almshouses sprang up all over the town. God's Houses ('Godshuisen') they called them, and call them still. They are to be found in all directions—quaint little places, planted down here and there, each with a small chapel of its own, with moss-grown roofs and dingy walls, and doors that open on to the uneven cobbles. Every stone of them spells pauperism. The Church does much towards maintaining these shelters for the poor—perhaps too much, if it is true that there are 10,000 paupers in Bruges out of a population of about 55,000. There is a great deal of begging in the streets, and a sad lack of sturdy self-respect amongst the lower class, which many think is caused by the system of doles, for which the Church is chiefly responsible. Bruges might not have been so picturesque to-day if her commerce had survived; but the beauty of a town is dearly purchased at the cost of such degradation and loss of personal independence.

BRUGES View of the Palais du Franc.



It was not only the working class which suffered. Many rich families sank into poverty, and their homes, some of which were more like palaces than private houses, had to be dismantled. The fate of one of these lordly mansions is connected with an episode which carries us back into the social life of Bruges in the middle of the seventeenth century. On the right side of the Rue Haute, as one goes from the Place du Bourg, there is a high block containing two large houses, Nos. 6 and 8, of that street. It is now a big, plain building without a trace of architectural distinction; but in the seventeenth century it was a single mansion, built about the year 1320, and was one of the many houses with towers which gave the Bruges of that time almost the appearance of an Oriental city. It was called the House of the Seven Towers, from the seven pinnacles which surmounted it; and at the back there was a large garden, which extended to the canal and Quai des Marbriers.

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In April, 1656, the 'tall man above two yards high, with dark brown hair, scarcely to be distinguished from black,' for whom the Roundheads had searched all England after the Battle of Worcester, found his way to Bruges, with his brother Henry, Duke of Gloucester, and the train of Royalists who formed their Court. For nearly three years after Worcester, Charles II. had lived in France; but in July, 1654, the alliance between Cromwell and Mazarin drove him to Germany, where he remained till Don John of Austria became Governor of the Spanish Netherlands. Thereupon the prospect of recovering the English throne by the assistance of Spain led him to remove his Court, which had been established for some time at Cologne, to Flanders. He arrived at Bruges on April 22, 1656. His brother James, Duke of York, and afterwards King of England, held a commission in the French army, and Mazarin offered him a command in Italy. Charles, however, requested him to leave the French army, and enter the service of Spain. At first James refused; but by the mediation of their sister, the Princess of Orange, he was persuaded to do as his brother wished, and join the Court at Bruges. The Irish Viscount Tarah received Charles, when he first arrived, in his house in the Rue du Vieux Bourg, and there gave him, we read in local history, 'une brillante hospitalité.' But in the beginning of June the Court took up its quarters in the House of the Seven Towers.

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During his sojourn in Flanders, Charles was carefully watched by the secret service officers of the Commonwealth Government, who sent home reports of all he did. These reports, many of which are in the Thurloe State Papers and other collections, contain some curious details about the exiled Court.

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There never was a more interesting 'English colony' at Bruges than at that time. Hyde, who received the Great Seal at Bruges, was there with Ormonde and the Earls of Bristol, Norwich, and Rochester. Sir Edward Nicholas was Secretary of State; and we read of Colonel Sydenham, Sir Robert Murray, and 'Mr. Cairless', who sat on the tree with Charles Stewart after Worcester fight. Another of the exiles at Bruges was Sir James Turner, the soldier of fortune, who served under Gustavus Adolphus, persecuted the Covenanters in Scotland, and is usually supposed to have been the original of Dugald Dalgetty in Sir Walter Scott's *Legend of Montrose*. A list of the royal household is still preserved at Bruges. It was prepared in order that the town council might fix the daily allowance of wine and beer which was to be given to the Court, and contains the names of about sixty persons, with a note of the supply granted to each family.

A 'Letter of Intelligence' (the report of a spy), dated from Bruges on September 29, 1656, mentions that Lilly, the astrologer of London, had written to say that the King would be restored to the throne next year, and that all the English at Bruges were delighted. But in the meantime they were very hard up for ready money. Ever since leaving England Charles and his followers had suffered from the most direful impecuniosity. We find Hyde declaring that he has 'neither shoes nor shirt.' The King himself was constantly running into debt for his meals, and his friends spent many a hungry day at Bruges. If by good luck they chanced to be in funds, one meal a day sufficed for a party of half a dozen courtiers. If it was cold they could not afford to purchase firewood. The Earl

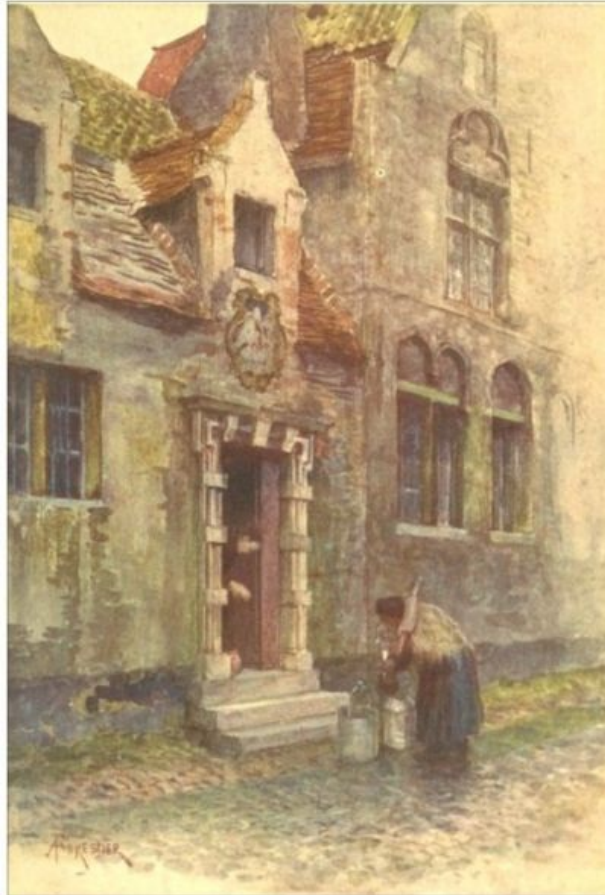
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of Norwich writes, saying that he has to move about so as to get lodgings on credit, and avoid people to whom he owes money. Colonel Borthwick, who claims to have served the King most faithfully, complains that he is in prison at Bruges on suspicion of disloyalty, has not changed his clothes for three years, and is compelled by lack of cash to go without a fire in winter. Sir James Hamilton, a gentleman-in-waiting, gets drunk one day, and threatens to kill the Lord Chancellor. He is starving, and declares it is Hyde's fault that the King gives him no money.

He will put on a clean shirt to be hanged in, and not run away, being without so much as a penny. Then we have the petition of a poor fencing-master. 'Heaven,' he writes piteously, 'hears the groans of the lowest creatures, and therefore I trust that you, being a terrestrial deity, will not disdain my supplication.' He had come from Cologne to Bruges to teach the royal household, and wanted his wages, for he and his family were starving.

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BRUGES **Maison du Pélican (Almshouse).**



Don John of Austria visited Charles at Bruges, and an allowance from the King of Spain was promised, so that men might be levied for the operations against Cromwell; but the payments were few and irregular. 'The English Court,' says a letter of February, 1657, 'remains still at Bridges [Bruges], never in greater want, nor greater expectations of money, without which all their levies are like to be at a stand; for Englishmen cannot live on bread alone.'

A 'Letter of Intelligence' sent from Sluis says that Charles is 'much loocked upon, but littell respected.' And this is not wonderful if the reports sent home by the Commonwealth agents are to be trusted. One of the spies who haunted the neighbourhood of Bruges was a Mr. Butler, who writes in the winter of 1656-1657: 'This last week one of the richest churches in Bruges was plundered in the night. The people of Bruges are fully persuaded that Charles Stewart's followers have done it. They spare no pains to find out the guilty, and if it happen to light upon any of Charles Stewart's train, it will mightily incense that people against them.... There is now a company of French comedians at Bruges, who are very punctually attended by Charles Stewart and his Court, and all the ladies there. Their most solemn day of acting is the Lord's Day. I think I may truly say that greater abominations were never practised among people than at this day at Charles Stewart's Court. Fornication, drunkenness, and adultery are esteemed no sins amongst them; so I persuade myself God will never prosper any of their attempts.'^[10] In another letter we read that once, after a hunting expedition, Charles and a gentleman of the bedchamber were the only two who came back sober. Sir James Turner was mad when drunk, 'and that was pretty often,' says Bishop Burnet.

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But, of course, it was the business of the spies to blacken the character of Charles; and there can be little doubt that, in spite of his poverty and loose morals, he was well liked by the citizens of Bruges, who, notwithstanding a great deal of outward decorum, have at no time been very strait-laced. 'Charles,' we learn from a local history, 'sut se rendre populaire en prenant part aux

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amusements de la population et en se pliant, sans effort comme sans affectation, aux usages du pays.' During his whole period of exile he contrived to amuse himself. Affairs of gallantry, dancing, tennis, billiards, and other frivolous pursuits, occupied as much of his attention as the grave affairs of State over which Hyde and Ormonde spent so many anxious hours. When on a visit to Brussels in the spring of 1657, he employed, we are told, most of his time with Don John dancing, or at 'long paume, a Spanish play with balls filled with wire.' And, again: 'He passes his time with shooting at Bruges, and such other obscure pastimes.'

This 'shooting' was the favourite Flemish sport of shooting with bow and arrows at an artificial bird fixed on a high pole, the prize being, on great occasions, a golden bird, which was hung by a chain of gold round the winner's neck. In the records of the Guilds of St. George and St. Sebastian at Bruges there are notices relating to Charles. The former was a society of cross-bowmen, the latter of archers. On June 11, 1656, Charles and the Duke of Gloucester were at the festival of the Society of St. George. Charles was the first to try his skill, and managed to hit the mark. After the Duke and many others had shot, Peter Pruyssenaere, a wine merchant in the Rue du Vieux Bourg, brought down the bird, and Charles hung the golden 'Bird of Honour' round his neck. On June 25 Charles visited the Society of St. Sebastian, when Michael Noé, a gardener, was the winner. The King and Gloucester both became members of the St. Sebastian, which is still a flourishing society. Going along the Rue des Carmes, the traveller passes the English convent on the left, and on the right, at the end of the street, comes to the Guildhouse of St. Sebastian, with its slender tower and quiet garden, one of the pleasantest spots in Bruges. There the names of Charles and his brother are to be seen inscribed in a small volume bound in red morocco, the 'Bird of Honour' with its chain of gold, a silver arrow presented by the Duke of Gloucester, and some other interesting relics. On September 15, 1843, Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, King Leopold I., and the Queen of the Belgians, went to the Rue des Carmes and signed their names as members of this society, which now possesses two silver cups, presented by the Queen of England in 1845 and 1893. The Duke of York seems to have been successful as an archer, for in the Hôtel de Ville at Bruges there is a picture by John van Meuninxhove, in which Charles is seen hanging the 'Bird of Honour' round his brother's neck.

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In April, 1657, the English Government was informed that the Court of Charles was preparing to leave Bruges. 'Yesterday' (April 7) 'some of his servants went before to Brussels to make ready lodgings for Charles Stewart, the Duke of York, and the Duke of Gloucester. All that have or can compass so much money go along with Charles Stewart on Monday morning. I do admire how people live here for want of money. Our number is not increased since my last. The most of them are begging again for want of money; and when any straggling persons come, we have not so much money as will take a single man to the quarters; yet we promise ourselves great matters.' They were hampered in all their movements by this want of hard cash, for Charles was in debt at Bruges, and could not remove his goods until he paid his creditors. It was sadly humiliating. 'The King,' we read, 'will hardly live at Bruges any more, but he cannot remove his family and goods till we get money.' The dilemma seems to have been settled by Charles, his brothers, and most of the Court going off to Brussels, leaving their possessions behind them. The final move did not take place till February, 1658, and Clarendon says that Charles never lived at Bruges after that date. He may, however, have returned on a short visit, for Jesse, in his *Memoirs of the Court of England under the Stuarts*, states that the King was playing tennis at Bruges when Sir Stephen Fox came to him with the great news, 'The devil is dead!' This would be in September, 1658, Cromwell having died on the third of that month. After the Restoration Charles sent to the citizens of Bruges a letter of thanks for the way in which they had received him. Nor did he forget, amidst the pleasures of the Court at Whitehall, the simple pastimes of the honest burghers, but presented to the archers of the Society of St. Sebastian the sum of 3,600 florins, which were expended on their hall of meeting.

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More than a hundred years later, when the Stuart dynasty was a thing of the past and George III. was seated on the throne of England, the Rue Haute saw the arrival of some travellers who were very different from the roystering Cavaliers and frail beauties who had made it gay in the days of the Merry Monarch. The English Jesuits of St. Omer, when expelled from their college, came to Bruges in August, 1762, and took up their abode in the House of the Seven Towers, where they found 'nothing but naked walls and empty chambers.' A miserable place it must have been. 'In one room a rough table of planks had been set up, and the famished travellers were rejoiced at the sight of three roast legs of mutton set on the primitive table. Knives, forks, and plates there were none. A Flemish servant divided the food with his pocket-knife. A farthing candle gave a Rembrandt-like effect to the scene. The boys slept that night on mattresses laid on the floor of one of the big empty rooms of the house. The first days at Bruges were cheerless enough.^[11] The religious houses, however, came to the rescue. Flemish monks and the nuns of the English convent helped the pilgrims, and the Jesuits soon established themselves at Bruges, where they remained in peace for a few years, till the Austrian Government drove them out. The same fate overtook the inmates of many monasteries and convents at Bruges in the reign of Joseph II., whose reforming zeal led to that revolt of the Austrian Netherlands which was the prelude to the invasion of Flanders by the army of the French Revolution.

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After the conquest of Belgium by the French it looked as if all the churches in Bruges were doomed. The Chapel of St. Basil was laid in ruins. The Church of St. Donatian, which had stood since the days of Baldwin Bras-de-Fer, was pulled down and disappeared entirely. Notre Dame, St. Sauveur, and other places of worship, narrowly escaped destruction; and it was not till the middle of the nineteenth century that the town recovered, in some measure, from these disasters.

Bruges has doubtless shared in the general prosperity which has spread over the country since Belgium became an independent kingdom after the revolution of 1830, but its progress has been

slow. It has never lost its old-world associations; and the names of the streets and squares, and the traditions connected with numberless houses which a stranger might pass without notice, are all so many links with the past. There is the Rue Espagnole, for example, where a vegetable market is held every Wednesday. This was the quarter where the Spanish merchants lived and did their business. There used to be a tall, dark, and, in fact, very dirty-looking old house in this street known by the Spanish name of the 'Casa Negra.' It was pulled down a few years ago; but lower down, at the foot of the street, the great cellars in which the Spaniards stored their goods remain; and on the Quai Espagnol was the Spanish Consulate, now a large dwelling-house. A few steps from the Quai Espagnol is the Place des Orientaux (Oosterlingen Plaats), where a minaret of tawny brick rises above the gables of what was once the Consulate of Smyrna, and on the north side of which, in the brave days of old, stood the splendid Maison des Orientaux, the headquarters of the Hanseatic League in Bruges, the finest house in Flanders, with turrets and soaring spire, and marvellous façade, and rooms inside all ablaze with gilding. The glory has departed; two modern dwelling-houses have taken the place of this commercial palace; but it must surely be a very dull imagination on which the sight of this spot, now so tranquil and commonplace, but once the centre of such important transactions, makes no impression. From the Place des Orientaux it is only a few minutes' stroll to the Rue Cour de Gand and the dark brown wooden front of the small house, now a lace shop, which tradition says was one of Memlinc's homes in Bruges, where we can fancy him, laboriously and with loving care, putting the last minute touches to some immortal painting.

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Then there is the Rue Anglaise, off the Quai Spinola, where the English Merchant Adventurers met to discuss their affairs in houses with such names as 'Old England' or 'The Tower of London.' The head of the colony, 'Governor of the English Nation beyond the Seas' they called him, was a very busy man 400 years ago.^[12] The Scottish merchants were settled in the same district, close to the Church of Ste. Walburge. They called their house 'Scotland,' and doubtless made as good bargains as the 'auld enemy' in the next street. There is a building called the Parijssche Halle, or Halle de Paris, hidden away among the houses to the west of the Market-Place, with a cafe and a theatre where Flemish plays are acted now, which was formerly the Consulate of France; and subscription balls and amateur theatricals are given by the English residents of to-day in the fourteenth-century house of the Genoese merchants in the Rue Flamande. The list of streets and houses with old-time associations like these might be extended indefinitely, for in Bruges the past is ever present.

BRUGES

Vegetable Market.



Even the flat-fronted, plain houses with which poverty or the bad taste of the last century replaced many of the older buildings do not spoil the picturesque appearance of the town as a whole, because it is no larger now than it was 600 years ago, and these modern structures are quite lost amongst their venerable neighbours. Thus Bruges retains its mediæval character. In the midst, however, of all this wealth of architectural beauty and historical interest, the atmosphere of common everyday life seems to be so very dull and depressing that people living there are apt to be driven, by sheer boredom, into spending their lives in a round of small excitements and incessant, wearisome gossip, and into taking far more interest in the paltry squabbles of their neighbours over some storm in a teacup than in the more important topics which invigorate the minds of men and women in healthier and broader societies. Long before Rodenbach's romance was written this peculiarity of Bruges was proverbial throughout Belgium.

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But it is possible that a change is at hand, and that Bruges may once again become, not the Venice

of the North—the time for that is past—but an important town, for the spirit of commercial enterprise which has done so much for other parts of Belgium during the last seventy-five years is now invading even this quiet place, whose citizens have begun to dream of recovering some portion of their former prosperity. In 1895 the Belgian Parliament passed a law providing for the construction, between Blankenberghe and Heyst, of a harbour connected with Bruges by a canal of large dimensions, and of an inner port at the town. The works at See-Brugge, as the outer port is called, are nearly completed, and will allow vessels drawing 26½ feet of water to float at any state of the tide. The jetty describes a large curve, and the bend is such that its extremity is parallel to the coast, and 930 yards distant from the low-water mark. The sheltered roadstead is about 272 acres in extent, and communication is made with the canal by a lock 66 feet wide and 282 yards in length. From this point the canal, which has a depth of 26½ feet and is fed by seawater, runs in a straight line to Bruges, and ends at the inner port, which is within a few hundred yards of where the *Roya* used to meet the *Zwijjn*. It is capable of affording a minimum capacity of 1,000,000 tons per annum, and the whole equipment has been fitted up necessary for dealing with this amount of traffic.

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The first ship, an English steamer, entered the new port at Bruges on the morning of May 29 in the present year (1905). The carillon rung from the Belfry, guns were fired, and a ceremony in honour of the event took place in the Hôtel de Ville. It now remains to be seen whether any part of the trade which was lost 400 years ago can be recovered by the skill of modern engineers and the resources of modern capital.

FOOTNOTES

- [10] Letter from Mr. J. Butler, Flushing, December 2, 1656, Thurloe State Papers, V., 645.
- [11] Robinson, *Bruges, an Historical Sketch*, p. 291.
- [12] In the *Flandria Illustrata* of Sanderus, vol. i., p. 275, there is a picture of the 'Domus Anglorum.'

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CHAPTER VII THE PLAIN OF WEST FLANDERS—YPRES

To the west of Bruges the wide plain of Flanders extends to the French frontier. Church spires and windmills are the most prominent objects in the landscape; but though the flatness of the scenery is monotonous, there is something pleasing to the eye in the endless succession of well-cultivated fields, interrupted at intervals by patches of rough bushland, canals, or slow-moving streams winding between rows of pollards, country houses embowered in woods and pleasure-grounds, cottages with fruitful gardens, orchards, small villages, and compact little towns, in most of which the diligent antiquary will find something of interest—a modest belfry, perhaps, with a romance of its own; a parish church, whose foundations were laid long ago in ground dedicated, in the distant past, to the worship of Thor or Woden; or the remains, it may be, of a mediæval castle, from which some worthy knight, whose name is forgotten except in local traditions, rode away to the Crusades.

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This part of West Flanders, which lies wedged in between the coast, with its populous bathing stations, and the better-known district immediately to the south of it, where Ghent, Tournai, Courtrai, and other important centres draw many travellers every year, is seldom visited by strangers, who are almost as much stared at in some of the villages as they would be in the streets of Pekin. It is, however, very accessible. The roads are certainly far from good, and anything in the shape of a walking tour is out of the question, for the strongest pedestrian would have all his pleasure spoiled by the hard-going of the long, straight causeway. The ideal way to see the Netherlands and study the life of the people is to travel on the canals; but these are not so numerous here as in other parts of the country, and, besides, it is not very easy to arrange for a passage on the barges. But, in addition to the main lines of the State Railway, there are the 'Chemins-de-fer Vicinaux,' or light district railways, which run through all parts of Belgium. The fares on these are very low, and there are so many stoppages that the traveller can see a great many places in the course of a single day. There are cycle tracks, too, alongside most of the roads, the cost of keeping them in order being paid out of the yearly tax paid by the owners of bicycles.

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THE FLEMISH PLAIN



This is the most purely Flemish part of Flanders. One very seldom notices that Spanish type of face which is so common elsewhere—at Antwerp, for instance. Here the race is almost unmixed, and the peasants speak nothing but Flemish to each other. Many of them do not understand a word of French, though in Belgium French is, as everyone knows, the language of public life and of literature. The newspapers published in Flemish are small, and do not contain much beyond local news. The result is that the country people in West Flanders know very little of what is going on in the world beyond their own parishes. The standard of education is low, being to a great extent in the hands of the clergy, who have hitherto succeeded in defeating all proposals for making it universal and compulsory.

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But, steeped as most of them are in ignorance and superstition, the agricultural labourers of West Flanders are, to all appearance, quite contented with their lot. Living is cheap, and their wants are few. Coffee, black bread, potatoes, and salted pork, are the chief articles of diet, and in some households even the pork is a treat for special occasions. They seldom taste butter, using lard instead; and the 'margarine' which is sold in the towns does not find its way into the cottages of the outlying country districts. Sugar has for many years been much dearer than in England, and the price is steadily rising, but with this exception the food of the people is cheap. Tea enters Belgium duty free, but the peasants never use it. Many villagers smoke coarse tobacco grown in their own gardens, and a 10-centimes cigar is the height of luxury. Tobacco being a State monopoly in France, the high price in that country makes smuggling common, and there is a good deal of contraband trading carried on in a quiet way on the frontiers of West Flanders. The average wage paid for field labour is from 1 franc 50 centimes to 2 francs a day for married men—that is to say, from about 1s. 3d. to 1s. 8d. of English money. Bachelors generally receive 1 franc (10d.) a day and their food. The working hours are long, often from five in the morning till eight in the evening in summer, and in winter from sunrise till sunset, with one break at twelve o'clock for dinner, consisting of bread with pork and black coffee, and another about four in the afternoon, when what remains of the mid-day meal is consumed.

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A FLEMISH COUNTRY GIRL



The Flemish farmhouse is generally a substantial building, with two large living-rooms, in which valuable old pieces of furniture are still occasionally to be found, though the curiosity dealers have, during the last quarter of a century, carried most of them away, polished them up, and sold them at a high profit. Carved chests, bearing the arms of ancient families, have been discovered lying full of rubbish in barns or stables, and handsome cabinets, with fine mouldings and brass fittings, have frequently been picked up for a few francs. The heavy beams of the ceilings, black with age, the long Flemish stoves, and the quaint window-seats deeply sunk in the thick walls, still remain, and make the interiors of many of these houses very picturesque; but the 'finds' of old furniture, curious brass or pewter dishes, and even stray bits of valuable tapestry, which used to rouse the cupidity of strangers, are now very rare. Almost all the brass work which is so eagerly bought by credulous tourists at Bruges in summer is bran-new stuff cleverly manufactured for sale—and sold it is at five or six times its real market value! There are no bargains to be picked up on the Dyver or in the shops of Bruges. [Pg 87]

DUINHOEK
Interior of a Farmhouse.



The country life is simple. A good deal of hard drinking goes on in most villages. More beer, probably, is consumed in Belgium per head of the population than in any other European country, Germany not excepted, and the system of swallowing 'little glasses' of fiery spirit on the top of beer brings forth its natural fruits. The drunken ways of the people are encouraged by the excessive number of public-houses. Practically anyone who can pay the Government fee and obtain a barrel of beer and a few tumblers may open a drinking-shop. It is not uncommon in a small country village with about 200 inhabitants to see the words 'Herberg' or 'Estaminet' over the doors of a dozen houses, in which beer is sold at a penny (or less) for a large glass, and where various throat-burning liquors of the *petit verre* species can be had at the same price; and the result is that very often a great portion of the scanty wage paid on Saturday evening is melted into beer or gin on Sunday and Monday.

As a rule, the Flemish labourer, being a merry, light-hearted soul, is merely noisy and jovial in a brutal sort of way in his cups; but let a quarrel arise, out come the knives, and before the rural policeman saunters along there are nasty rows, ending in wounds and sometimes in murder. When the lots are drawn for military service, and crowds of country lads with their friends flock into the towns, the public-houses do good business. Those who have drawn lucky numbers, and so escaped the conscription, get drunk out of joy; while those who find they must serve in the army drown their sorrow, or celebrate the occasion if they are of a martial turn, by reeling about the streets arm in arm with their companions, shouting and singing. Whole families, old and young alike, often join in these performances, and they must be very drunk and very disorderly before the police think of making even the mildest remonstrance.

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The gay character of the Flemings is best seen at the 'kermesse,' or fair, which is held in almost every village during summer. At Bruges, Ypres, and Furnes, and still more in such large cities as Brussels or Antwerp, the kermesse has ceased to be typical of the country, and is supplanted by fairs such as may be seen in England or in almost any other country. 'Merry-go-rounds' driven by steam, elaborate circuses, menageries, waxwork exhibitions, movable theatres, and modern 'shows' of every kind travel about, and settle for a few days, perhaps even for a few weeks, in various towns. The countryfolk of the surrounding district are delighted, and the showmen reap a goodly harvest of francs and centimes; but these fairs are tiresome and commonplace, much less amusing and lively than, for example, St. Giles's Fair at Oxford, though very nearly as noisy. But the kermesse proper, which still survives in some places, shows the Flemings amusing themselves in something more like the old fashion than anything which can be seen in the Market-Place of Bruges or on the boulevards of Brussels or Antwerp. Indeed, some of the village scenes, when the young people are dancing or shooting with bows and arrows at the mark, while the elders sit, with their mugs of beer and long pipes, watching and gossiping, are very like what took place in the times of the old painters who were so fond of producing pictures of the kermesses. The dress of the people, of course, is different, but the spirit of the scene, with its homely festivities, is wonderfully little changed.

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About twenty miles from the French frontier is the town of Ypres, once the capital of Flanders, and which in the time of Louis of Nevers was one of the three 'bonnes villes,' Bruges and Ghent being the others, which appointed deputies to defend the rights and privileges of the whole Flemish people.

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As Bruges grew out of the rude fortress on the banks of the Roya, so Ypres developed from a stronghold built, probably about the year 900, on a small island in the river Yperlee. It was triangular in shape, with a tower at each corner, and was at first known by the inhabitants of the surrounding plain as the 'Castle of the Three Towers.' In course of time houses began to appear on

the banks of the river near the island. A rampart of earth with a ditch defended these, and as the place grew, the outworks became more extensive. Owing to its strategic position, near France and in a part of Flanders which was constantly the scene of war, it was of great importance; and probably no other Flemish town has seen its defences so frequently altered and enlarged as Ypres has between the primitive days when the Crusading Thierry d'Alsace planted hedges of live thorns to strengthen the towers, and the reign of Louis XIV., when a vast and elaborate system of fortifications was constructed on scientific principles, under the direction of Vauban.

The citizens of Ypres took a prominent part in most of the great events which distinguished the heroic period of Flemish history. In July, 1302, a contingent of 1,200 chosen men, '500 of them clothed in scarlet and the rest in black,' were set to watch the town and castle of Courtrai during the Battle of the Golden Spurs, and in the following year the victory was celebrated by the institution of the Confraternity of the Archers of St. Sebastian, which still exists at Ypres, the last survivor of the armed societies which flourished there during the Middle Ages. Seven hundred burghers of Ypres marched to Sluis, embarked in the Flemish boats which harassed the French fleet during the naval fight of June, 1340, and at the close of the campaign formed themselves into the Confraternity of St. Michael, which lasted till the French invasion of 1794. Forty years later we find no fewer than 5,000 of the men of Ypres, who had now changed their politics, on the French side at the Battle of Roosebeke, fighting in the thick mist upon the plain between Ypres and Roulers on that fatal day which saw the death of Philip van Artevelde and the triumph of the Leliarts.

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ADINKERQUE

At the Kermesse.



Next year, so unceasingly did the tide of war flow over the plain of Flanders, an English army, commanded by Henry Spencer, Bishop of Norwich, landed at Calais under the pretext of supporting the partisans of Pope Urban VI., who then occupied the Holy See, against the adherents of Pope Clement VII., who had established himself at Avignon. The burghers of Ghent flocked to the English standard, and the allies laid siege to Ypres, which was defended by the French and the Leliarts, who followed Louis of Maele, Count of Flanders, and maintained the cause of Clement.

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At that time the gateways were the only part of the fortifications made of stone. The ramparts were of earth, planted on the exterior slope with a thick mass of thorn-bushes, interlaced and strengthened by posts. Outside there were more defences of wooden stockades, and beyond them two ditches, divided by a dyke, on which was a palisade of pointed stakes. The town, thus fortified, was defended by about 10,000 men, and on June 8, 1383, the siege was begun by a force consisting of 17,000 English and 20,000 Flemings of the national party, most of whom came from Bruges and Ghent.

The English had been told that the town would not offer a strong resistance, and on the first day of the siege 1,000 of them tried to carry it at once by assault. They were repulsed; and after that

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assaults by the besiegers and sorties by the garrison continued day after day, the loss of life on both sides being very great. At last the besiegers, finding that they could not, in the face of the shower of arrows, javelins, and stones which met them, break through the palisades and the sharp thorn fences (those predecessors of the barbed-wire entanglements of to-day), force the gates, or carry the ramparts, built three wooden towers mounted on wheels, and pushed them full of soldiers up to the gates. But the garrison made a sortie, seized the towers, destroyed them, and killed or captured the soldiers who manned them.

Spencer on several occasions demanded the surrender of the town, but all his proposals were rejected. The English pressed closer and closer, but were repulsed with heavy losses whenever they delivered an assault. The hopes of the garrison rose high on August 7, the sixty-first day of the siege, when news arrived that a French army, 100,000 strong, accompanied by the forces of the Count of Flanders, was marching to the relief of Ypres. Early next morning the English made a fresh attempt to force their way into the town, but they were once more driven back. A little later in the day they twice advanced with the utmost bravery. Again they were beaten back. So were the burghers of Ghent, whom the English reproached for having deceived them by saying that Ypres would fall in three days, and whose answer to this accusation was a furious attack on one of the gates, in which many of them fell. In the afternoon the English again advanced, and succeeded in forcing their way through part of the formidable thorn hedge; but it was of no avail, and once more they had to retire, leaving heaps of dead behind them. After a rest of some hours, another attack was made on seven different parts of the town at the same time. This assault was the most furious and bloody of the siege, but it was the last. Spencer saw that, in spite of the splendid courage of his soldiers and of the Flemish burghers, it would be impossible to take the town before the French army arrived, and during the night the English, with their allies from Ghent and Bruges, retired from before Ypres. The failure of this campaign left Flanders at the mercy of France; but the death of Count Louis of Maele, which took place in January, 1384, brought in the House of Burgundy, under whose rule the Flemings enjoyed a long period of prosperity and almost complete independence.

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It was believed in Ypres that the town had been saved by the intercession of the Virgin Mary, its patron saint. In the Cathedral Church of St. Martin the citizens set up an image of Notre Dame-de-Thuine, that is, Our Lady of the Enclosures, an allusion to the strong barrier of thorns which had kept the enemy at bay; and a kermesse, appointed to be held on the first Sunday of August every year in commemoration of the siege, received the name of the 'Thuindag,' or Day of the Enclosures.^[14] The people of Ypres, though they fought on the French side, had good reason to be proud of the way in which they defended their homes; but the consequences of the siege were disastrous, for the commerce of the town never recovered the loss of the large working-class population which left it at that time.

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A FARMSTEADING



The religious troubles of the sixteenth century left their mark on Ypres as well as on the rest of Flanders. Everyone has read the glowing sentences in which the historian of the Dutch Republic describes the Cathedral of Antwerp, and tells how it was wrecked by the reformers during the image-breaking in the summer of 1566. What happened on the banks of the Scheldt

appeals most to the imagination; but all over Flanders the statues and the shrines, the pictures and the stores of ecclesiastical wealth, with which piety, or superstition, or penitence had enriched so many churches and religious houses, became the objects of popular fury. There had been field-preaching near Ypres as early as 1562.^[15] Other parts of West Flanders had been visited by the apostles of the New Learning, and on August 15, 1566, the reformers swept down upon Ypres and sacked the churches.

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In the awful tragedy which soon followed, when Parma came upon the scene, that 'spectacle of human energy, human suffering, and human strength to suffer, such as has not often been displayed upon the stage of the world's events', the town had its share of the persecutions and exactions which followed the march of the Spanish soldiery; but for more than ten years a majority of the burghers adhered to the cause of Philip. In July, 1578, however, Ypres fell into the hands of the Protestants, and became their headquarters in West Flanders. Five years later Alexander of Parma besieged it. The siege lasted until April of the following year, when the Protestants, worn out by famine, capitulated, and the town was occupied by the Spaniards, who 'resorted to instant measures for cleansing a place which had been so long in the hands of the infidels, and, as the first step towards this purification, the bodies of many heretics who had been buried for years were taken from their graves and publicly hanged in their coffins. All living adherents to the Reformed religion were instantly expelled from the place.'^[16] By this time the population was reduced to 5,000 souls, and the fortifications were a heap of ruins.

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A grim memorial of those troublous times is still preserved at Ypres. The Place du Musée is a quiet corner of the town, where a Gothic house with double gables contains a collection of old paintings, medals, instruments of torture, and some other curiosities. It was the Bishop of Ypres who, at midnight on June 4, 1568, announced to Count Egmont, in his prison at Brussels, that his hour had come; and the cross-hilted sword, with its long straight blade, which hangs on the wall of the Museum is the sword with which the executioner 'severed his head from his shoulders at a single blow' on the following morning. The same weapon, a few minutes later, was used for the despatch of Egmont's friend, Count Horn.

YPRES

Place du Musée (showing Top Part of the Belfry).



Before the end of that dismal sixteenth century Flanders regained some of the liberties for which so much blood had been shed; but while the Protestant Dutch Republic rose in the north, the 'Catholic' or 'Spanish' Netherlands in the south remained in the possession of Spain until the marriage of Philip's daughter Isabella to the Archduke Albert, when these provinces were given as a marriage portion to the bride. This was in 1599. Though happier times followed under the moderate rule of Albert and Isabella, war continued to be the incessant scourge of Flanders, and during the marching and countermarching of armies across this battlefield of Europe, Ypres scarcely ever knew what peace meant. Four times besieged and four times taken by the French in the wars of Louis XIV., the town had no rest; and for miles all round it the fields were scarred by the new system of attacking strong places which Vauban had introduced into the art of war. Louis, accompanied by Schomberg and Luxembourg, was himself present at the siege of 1678; and Ypres, having been ceded to France by the Treaty of Nimeguen in that year, was afterwards strengthened by fortifications constructed from plans furnished by the great French engineer.^[17]

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In the year 1689 Vauban speaks of Ypres as a place 'formerly great, populous, and busy, but much reduced by the frequent sedition and revolts of its inhabitants, and by the great wars which it has

endured.' And in this condition it has remained ever since. Though the period which followed the Treaty of Rastadt in 1714, when Flanders passed into the possession of the Emperor Charles VI., and became a part of the 'Austrian Netherlands,' was a period of considerable improvement, Ypres never recovered its position, not even during the peaceful reign of the Empress Maria Theresa. The revolution against Joseph II. disturbed everything, and in June, 1794, the town yielded, after a short siege, to the army of the French Republic. The name of Flanders disappeared from the map of Europe. The whole of Belgium was divided, like France, with which it was now incorporated, into *départements*, Ypres being in the Department of the Lys. For twenty years, during the wars of the Republic, the Consulate, and the Empire, though the conscription was a constant drain upon the youth of Flanders, who went away to leave their bones on foreign soil, nothing happened to disturb the quiet of the town, and the fortifications were falling into decay when the return of Napoleon from Elba set Europe in a blaze. During the Hundred Days guns and war material were hurried over from England, the old defences were restored, and new works constructed by the English engineers; but the Battle of Waterloo rendered these preparations unnecessary, and the military history of Ypres came to an end when the short-lived Kingdom of the Netherlands was established by the Congress of Vienna, though it was nominally a place of arms till 1852, when the fortifications were destroyed. Nowadays everything is very quiet and unwarlike. The bastions and lunettes, the casemates and moats, which spread in every direction round the town, have almost entirely disappeared, and those parts of the fortifications which remain have been turned into ornamental walks.^[18]

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But while so little remains of the works which were constructed, at such a cost and with so much labour, for the purposes of war, the arts of peace, which once flourished at Ypres, have left a more enduring monument. There is nothing in Bruges or any other Flemish town which can compare for massive grandeur with the pile of buildings at the west end of the Grand' Place of Ypres. During two centuries the merchants of Flanders, whose towns were the chief centres of Western commerce and civilization, grew to be the richest in Europe, and a great portion of the wealth which industry and public spirit had accumulated was spent in erecting those noble civic and commercial buildings which are still the glory of Flanders. The foundation-stone of the Halle des Drapiers, or Cloth Hall, of Ypres was laid by Baldwin of Constantinople, then Count of Flanders, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, but more than 100 years had passed away before it was completed. Though the name of the architect who began it is unknown, the unity of design which characterizes the work makes it probable that the original plans were adhered to till the whole was finished. Nothing could be simpler than the general idea; but the effect is very fine. The ground-floor of the façade, about 150 yards long, is pierced by a number of rectangular doors, over which are two rows of pointed windows, each exactly above the other, and all of the same style. In the upper row every second window is filled up, and contains the statue of some historical character. At each end there is a turret; and the belfry, a square with towers at the corners, rises from the centre of the building.

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Various additions have been made from time to time to the original Halle des Drapiers since it was finished in the year 1304, and of these the 'Nieuwerck' is the most interesting. The east end of the Halle was for a long time hidden by a number of wooden erections, which, having been put up for various purposes after the main building was finished, were known as the 'Nieuwe wercken,' or new works. They were pulled down in the beginning of the seventeenth century, and replaced by the stone edifice, in the style of the Spanish Renaissance, which now goes by the name of the Nieuwerck, with its ten shapely arches supported by slender pillars, above whose sculptured capitals rise tiers of narrow windows and the steeply-pitched roof with gables of curiously carved stone. Ypres had ceased to be a great commercial city long before the Nieuwerck was built; but the Cloth Hall was a busy place during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when Ypres shared with Bruges the responsibility of managing the Flemish branch of the Hanseatic League.

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The extensive system of monopolies which the League maintained was, as a matter of course, the cause of much jealousy and bad feeling. In Flanders, Ghent, Bruges, and Ypres defended their own privileges against other towns, and quarrelled amongst themselves. The merchants of Ypres had a monopoly which forbade all weaving for three leagues round the town, under a penalty of fifty livres and confiscation of the looms and linen woven; but the weavers in the neighbouring communes infringed this monopoly, and sold imitations of Ypres linen cloth on all hands. There was constant trouble between the people of Ypres and their neighbours at Poperinghe. Sometimes the weavers of Ypres, to enforce their exclusive privileges, marched in arms against Poperinghe, and sometimes the men of Poperinghe retaliated by attacking their powerful rivals. Houses were burnt, looms were broken up, and lives were lost in these struggles, which were so frequent that for a long time something like a chronic state of war existed between the two places.

YPRES

Arcade under the Nieuwerk.



Besides the troubles caused by the jealousy of other towns, intestine disputes arising out of the perpetual contest between labour and capital went on from year to year within the walls of Ypres. There, as in the other Flemish towns, a sharp line was drawn between the working man, by whose hands the linen was actually woven, and the merchants, members of the Guilds, by whom it was sold. In these towns, which maintained armies and made treaties of peace, and whose friendship was sought by princes and statesmen, the artisans, whose industry contributed so much to the importance of the community, resented any infringement of their legal rights. By law the magistrates of Ypres were elected annually, and because this had not been done in 1361 the people rose in revolt against the authorities. The mob invaded the Hôtel de Ville, where the magistrates were assembled. The Baillie, Jean Deprysenaeere, trusting to his influence as the local representative of the Count of Flanders, left the council chamber, and tried to appease the rioters. He was set upon and killed. Then the crowd rushed into the council chamber, seized the other magistrates, and locked them up in the belfry, where they remained prisoners for some days. The leaders of the revolt met, and resolved to kill their prisoners, and this sentence was executed on the Burgomaster and two of the Sheriffs, who were beheaded in front of the Halle in the presence of their colleagues.^[19] It was by such stern deeds that the fierce democracy of the Flemish communes preserved their rights.

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Each town, however, stood for itself alone. The idea of government by the populace on the marketplace was common to them all, but they were kept apart by the exclusive spirit of commercial jealousy. The thirst for material prosperity consumed them; but they had no bond of union, and each was ready to advance its own interests at the expense of its rivals. Therefore, either in the face of foreign invasion, or when the policy of some Count led to revolt and civil war, it was seldom that the people of Flanders were united. 'L'Union fait la Force' is the motto of modern Belgium, but in the Middle Ages there was no powerful central authority round which the communes rallied. Hence the spectacle of Ghent helping an English army to storm the ramparts of Ypres, or of the Guildsmen of Bruges girding on their swords to strike a blow for Count Louis of Maele against the White Hoods who marched from Ghent. Hence the permanent unrest of these Flemish towns, the bickerings and the sheddings of blood, the jealousy of trade pitted against trade or of harbour against harbour, the insolence in the hour of triumph and the abject submission in the hour of defeat, and all the evils which discord brought upon the country. No town suffered more than Ypres from the distracted state of Flanders, which, combined with the ravages of war and the religious dissensions of the sixteenth century, reduced it from the first rank amongst the cities of the Netherlands to something very like the condition of a quiet country town in an out-of-the-way corner of England. That is what the Ypres of to-day is like—a sleepy country town, with clean, well-kept streets, dull and uninteresting save for the stately Cloth Hall, which stands there a silent memorial of the past.

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FOOTNOTES

- [13] Bicycles entering Belgium pay an *ad valorem* duty of 12 per cent.
- [14] Thuin,' or 'tuin,' in Flemish means an enclosed space, such as a garden plot.
- [15] Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, part ii., chapter vi.
- [16] Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, part ii., chapter vi.
- [17] Letter from Vauban to Louvois on the fortifications of Ypres, 1689; Vereecke, pp. 325-357.
- [18] The evolution of Ypres from a feudal tower on an island until it became a great fortress can be traced in a very interesting volume of maps and plans published by M. Vereecke in 1858, as a supplement to his *Histoire Militaire d'Ypres*. It shows the first defensive works, those erected by Vauban, the state of the

CHAPTER VIII FURNES—THE PROCESSION OF PENITENTS

THE traveller wandering amongst the towns and villages in this corner of West Flanders is apt to feel that he is on a kind of sentimental journey as he moves from place to place, and finds himself everywhere surrounded by things which belong to the past rather than to the present. The very guidebooks are eloquent if we read between the lines. This place 'was formerly of much greater importance.' That 'was formerly celebrated for its tapestries.' From this Hôtel de Ville 'the numerous statuettes with which the building was once embellished have all disappeared.' The tower of that church has been left unfinished for the last 500 years. 'Fuimus' might be written on them all. And so, some twenty miles north of Ypres, on a plain which in the seventeenth century was so studded with earthen redoubts and serrated by long lines of field-works and ditches that the whole countryside between Ypres and Dunkirk was virtually one vast entrenched camp, we come to the town of Furnes, another of the places on which time has laid its heavy hand.

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The early history of Furnes is obscure, though it is generally supposed to have grown up round a fortress erected by Baldwin Bras-de-Fer to check the inroads of the Normans. It suffered much, like its neighbours, from wars and revolutions,^[20] and is now one of the quietest of the Flemish towns. The market-place is a small square, quaintly picturesque, surrounded by clusters of little brick houses with red and blue tiled roofs, low-stepped gables, and deep mouldings round the windows. Behind these dwelling-places the bold flying buttresses of the Church of Ste. Walburge, whose relics were brought to Furnes by Judith, wife of Baldwin Bras-de-Fer, and the tower of St. Nicholas, lift themselves on the north and east; and close together in a corner to the west are the dark gray Hôtel de Ville and Palais de Justice, in a room of which the judges of the Inquisition used to sit.

FURNES Grande Place and Belfry.



Though some features are common to nearly all the Flemish towns—the market-place, the belfry, the Hôtel de Ville, the old gateways, and the churches, with their cherished paintings—yet each of

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them has generally some association of its own. In Bruges we think of how the merchants bought and sold, how the gorgeous city rose, clothed itself in all the colours of the rainbow, glittered for a time, and sank in darkness. In the crowded streets of modern Ghent, the busy capital of East Flanders, we seem to catch a glimpse of bold Jacques van Artevelde shouldering his way up to the Friday Market, or of turbulent burghers gathering there to set Pope, or Count of Flanders, or King of Spain at defiance. Ypres and its flat meadows suggest one of the innumerable paintings of the Flemish wars, the 'battle-pieces' in which the Court artists took such pride: the town walls with ditch and glacis before them, and within them the narrow-fronted houses, and the flag flying from steeple or belfry; the clumsy cannon puffing out clouds of smoke; the King of France capering on a fat horse and holding up his baton in an attitude of command in the foreground; and in the distance the tents of the camp, where the travelling theatre was set up, and the musicians fiddled, and an army of serving-men waited on the rouged and powdered ladies who had followed the army into Flanders.

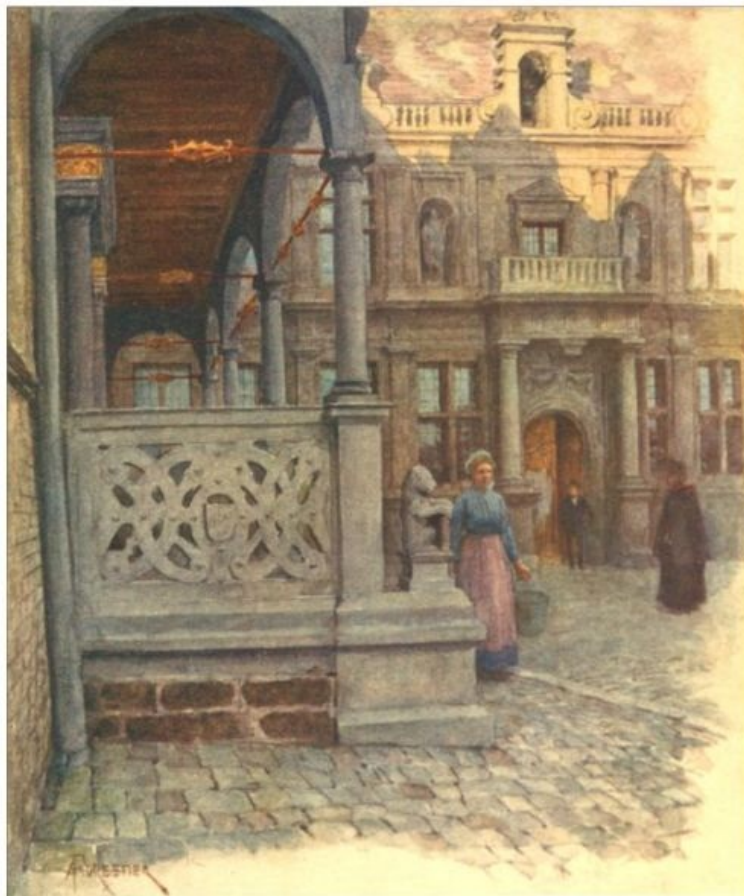
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Furnes, somehow, always recalls the Spanish period. The Hôtel de Ville, a very beautiful example of the Renaissance style, with its rare hangings of Cordovan leather and its portraits of the Archduke Albert and his bride, the Infanta Isabella, is scarcely changed since it was built soon after the death of Philip II. The Corps de Garde Espagnol and the Pavilion des Officiers Espagnols in the market-place, once the headquarters of the whiskered bravos who wrought such ills to Flanders, are now used by the Municipal Council of the town as a museum and a public library; but the stones of this little square were often trodden by the persecutors, with their guards and satellites, in the years when Peter Titelmann the Inquisitor stalked through the fields of Flanders, torturing and burning in the name of the Catholic Church and by authority of the Holy Office. The spacious room in which the tribunal of the Inquisition sat is nowadays remarkable only for its fine proportions and venerable appearance; but, though it was not erected until after the Spanish fury had spent its force, and at a time when wiser methods of government had been introduced, it reminds us of the days when the maxims of Torquemada were put in force amongst the Flemings by priests more wicked and merciless than any who could be found in Spain.

And in the market-place the people must often have seen the dreadful procession by means of which the Church sought to strike terror into the souls of men. Those public orgies of clerical intolerance were the suitable consummation of the crimes which had been previously committed in the private conclave of the Inquisitors. The burning or strangling of a heretic was not accompanied by so much pomp and circumstance in small towns like Furnes as in the great centres, where multitudes, led by the highest in the land, were present to enjoy the spectacle; but the Inquisition of the Netherlands, under which Flanders groaned for so many years, was, as Philip himself once boasted, 'much more pitiless than that of Spain.'

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FURNES **Peristyle of Town Hall and Palais de Justice.**



The groans of the victims will never more be heard in the torture-chamber, nor will crowds

assemble in the market-place to watch the cortège of the *auto-da-fé*; but every year the famous Procession of Penitents, which takes place on the last Sunday of July, draws many strangers to Furnes.

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It is said in Bruges that the ghost of a Spanish soldier, condemned to expiate eternally a foul crime done at the bidding of the Holy Office, walks at midnight on the Quai Vert, like Hamlet's father on the terrace at Elsinore; and superstitious people might well fancy that a spectre appears in the market-place of Furnes on the summer's night when the town is preparing for the annual ceremony. The origin of the procession was this: In the year 1650 a soldier named Mannaert, only twenty-two years old, being in garrison at Furnes, went to Confession and Communion in the Chapel of the Capucins. After he had received the consecrated wafer, he was persuaded by one of his comrades, Mathurin Lejeusne, to take it out of his mouth, wrap it in a cloth, and, on returning to his lodging, fry it over a fire, under the delusion that by reducing it to powder he would make himself invulnerable. The young man was arrested, confessed his guilt, and himself asked for punishment. Condemned to be strangled, he heard the sentence without a murmur, and went to his death singing the penitential psalms. Soon afterwards Mathurin Lejeusne, the instigator of the sacrilege, was shot for some breach of military duty. This was regarded as a proof of Divine justice, and the citizens resolved that something must be done to appease the wrath of God, which they feared would fall upon their town because of the outrage done, as they believed, to the body of His Son. A society calling itself the 'Confrérie de la Sodalité du Sauveur Crucifié et de la Sainte Mère Marie, se trouvant en douleur dessous la Croix, sur Mont Calvaire,' had been formed a few years before at Furnes, and the members now decided that a Procession of Penitents should walk through the streets every summer and represent to the people the story of the Passion.

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NIEUPORT **Interior of Church.**



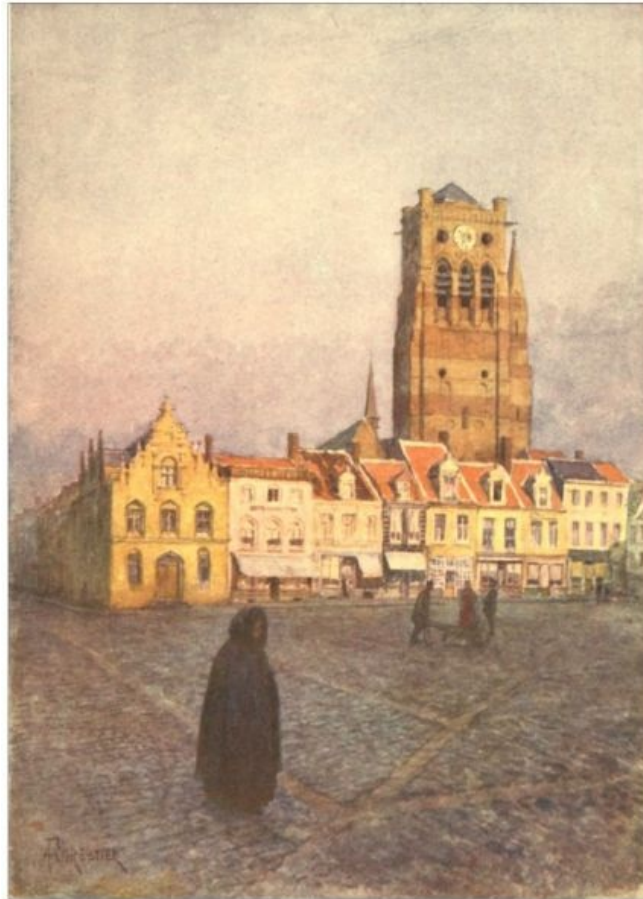
Though the procession at Furnes is a thing of yesterday compared to the Procession of the Holy Blood at Bruges, it is far more suggestive of mediævalism. The hooded faces of the penitents, the quaint wooden figures representing Biblical characters, the coarse dresses, the tawdry colours, the strangely weird arrangement of the whole business, take us back into the monkish superstitions of the Dark Ages, with their mystery plays. It is best seen from one of the windows of the Spanish House, or from the balcony of the Hôtel de Ville, on a sultry day, when the sky is heavy with black clouds, and thunder growls over the plain of Flanders, and hot raindrops fall now and then into the muddy streets. The first figure which appears is a veiled penitent bearing the standard of the Sodality. Then come, one after another, groups of persons representing various scenes in the Bible story, each group preceded by a penitent carrying an inscription to explain what follows. Abraham with his sword conducts Isaac to the sacrifice on Mount Moriah. A penitent holding the serpent and the cross walks before Moses. Two penitents wearily drag a car on which Joseph and Mary are seen seated in the stable at Bethlehem. The four shepherds and the three Magi follow. Then comes the flight into Egypt, with Mary on an ass led by Joseph, the infant Christ in her arms. Later we see the doctors of the Temple walking in two rows, disputing with the young

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Jesus in their midst. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem is represented by a crowd of schoolchildren waving palm-branches and singing hosannahs round Jesus mounted on an ass. The agony in the garden, Peter denying his Lord and weeping bitterly, Jesus crowned with thorns, Pilate in his judgment-hall, the Saviour staggering beneath the cross, the Crucifixion itself, the Resurrection and the Ascension, are all shown with the crude realism of the Middle Ages. There are penitents bearing ponderous crosses on their shoulders, or carrying in their hands the whips, the nails, the thorns, the veil of the Temple rent in twain, a picture of the darkened sun, and other symbols of the Passion. At the end, amidst torches and incense and solemn chanting, the Host is exhibited for the adoration of the crowd.

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FURNES Tower of St. Nicholas.



Much of this spectacle is grotesque, and even ludicrous; but there is also a great deal that is terribly real, for the penitents are not actors playing a part, but are all persons who have come to Furnes for the purpose of doing penance. They are disguised by the dark brown robes which cover them from head to foot, so that they can see their way only through the eyeholes in the hoods which hide their faces; but as they pass silently along, bending under the heavy crosses, or holding out before them scrolls bearing such words as, 'All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn,' 'They pierced My hands and My feet,' or, 'See if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow,' there are glimpses of delicate white hands grasping the hard wood of the crosses, and of small, shapely feet bare in the mud. What sighs, what tears and vain regrets, what secret tragedies of passion, guilt, remorse, may not be concealed amongst the doleful company who tread their own Via Dolorosa on that pilgrimage of sorrow through the streets of Furnes!

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FURNES In St. Walburge's Church.



FOOTNOTES

[20]

'Furnes était devenue un *oppidium*, aux termes d'une charte de 1183, qui avait à se défendre à la fois contre les incursions des étrangers et les attaques d'une population "indocile et cruelle," comme l'appelle l'Abbé de Saint Riquier Hariulf, toujours déchirée par les factions et toujours prête à la révolte.'—GILLIODTS VAN SEVEREN: *Recueil des Anciennes Coutumes de la Belgique; Quartier de Furnes*, vol. i., p. 28.

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CHAPTER IX NIEUPOORT—THE BATTLE OF THE DUNES

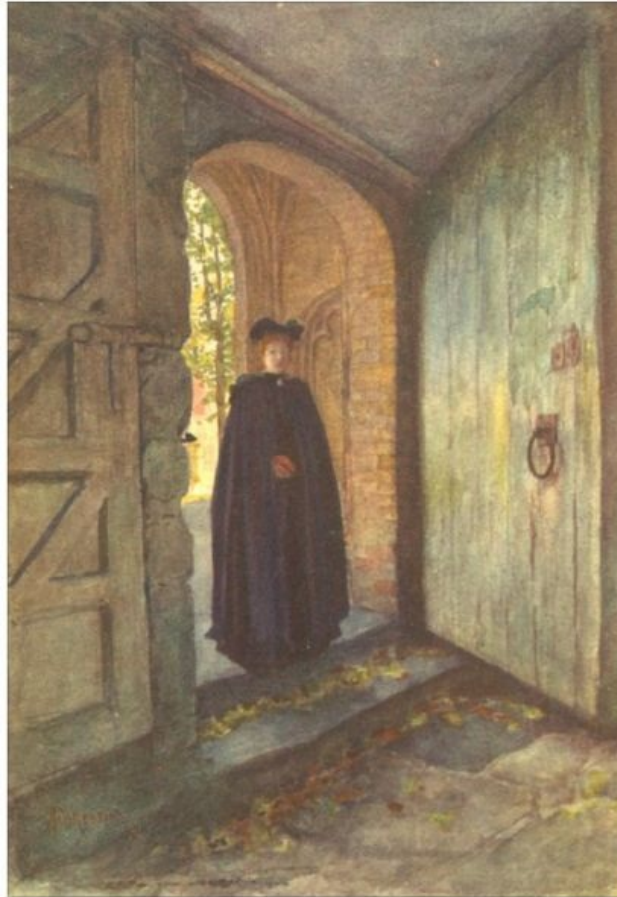
ON the morning of July 2, in the year 1600, two armies—Spaniards, under the Archduke Albert, and Dutchmen, under Prince Maurice of Nassau—stood face to face amongst the dunes near Nieupoort, where the river Yser falls into the sea about ten miles west from Ostend.

In a field to the east of Nieupoort there is a high, square tower, part of a monastery and church erected by the Templars in the middle of the twelfth century, which, though it escaped complete destruction, was set on fire and nearly consumed when the town was attacked and laid in ruins by the English and the burghers of Ghent in 1383, the year of their famous siege of Ypres. It is now in a half-ruinous condition, but in July, 1600, it was an important part of the fortifications, and from the top the watchmen of the Spanish garrison could see the country all round to a great distance beyond the broad moat which then surrounded the strong walls of Nieupoort. A few miles inland, to the southwest, in the middle of the plain of Flanders, were the houses of Furnes, grouped round the church tower of St. Nicholas. To the north a wide belt of sandhills (the 'dunes'), with the sea beyond them, extended far past Ostend on the east, and to the harbour of Dunkirk on the west. Nearer, on the landward side of the dunes to the east, and within less than a mile of each other, were the villages of Westende and Lombaerdzyde. Close at hand, all round Nieupoort, there were numerous small lakes and watercourses connected with the channel of the Yser, which, flowing past the town, widened out until it joined the sea, and became a harbour, which on that morning was full of shipping.

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A new chapter had just begun in the history of West Flanders when the Dutchmen and the Spaniards thus met to slaughter each other amongst the sand and rushes of the dunes. Philip II. had offered to cede the Spanish Netherlands to his daughter, the Infanta Isabella, on condition that a marriage was arranged between her and the Archduke Albert of Austria. After the death of Philip II. this offer was confirmed by his successor, Philip III., and the wedding took place in April,

NIEUPOORT
A Fair Parishioner.



Albert and Isabella were both entering on the prime of life, the Archduke being forty and the Infanta thirty-two at the time of their marriage, and were both of a character admirably fitted for the lofty station to which they had been called. In their portraits, which hang, very often frayed and tarnished, on the walls of the Hôtel de Ville of many a Flemish town, there is nothing very royal or very attractive; but, even after making every allowance for the flattery of contemporary historians, there can be little doubt that their popularity was well deserved—well deserved if even a part of what has been said about them is true. The Archduke is always said to have taken Philip II. as a model of demeanour, but he had none of the worst faults of the sullen, powerful despot, with that small mind, that 'incredibly small' mind of his, and cold heart, cold alike to human suffering and human love, who had held the Flemings, whom he hated, for so many years in the hollow of his hand. His grave mien and reserved habits, probably acquired during his sojourn at the Court of Spain, were distasteful to the gay and pleasure-loving people of Flanders, who would have preferred a Prince more like Charles V., whose versatility enabled him to adapt himself to the customs of each amongst the various races over whom he ruled. Nevertheless, if they did not love him they respected him, and were grateful for the moderation and good feeling which distinguished his reign, and gave their distracted country, after thirty years of civil war, a period of comparative tranquillity.

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The Infanta Isabella, *débonnaire*, affable, tolerant, and noble-hearted, as she is described, gained the hearts of the Flemings as her husband never did. 'One could not find any Court more truly royal or more brilliant in its public fêtes, which sometimes recall the splendid epoch of the House of Burgundy. Isabella loves a country life. She is often to be seen on horseback, attending the tournaments, leading the chase, flying the hawk, taking part in the sports of the bourgeoisie, shooting with the crossbow, and carrying off the prize.' Above all things, her works of charity endeared her to the people. In time of war she established hospitals for the wounded, for friends and enemies alike, where she visited them, nursed them, and dressed their wounds with her own hands, with heroic courage and tenderness.^[21]

Even on their first coming into Flanders, before their characters were known except by hearsay, they were received with extraordinary enthusiasm. Travelling by way of vLuxembourg, they came to Namur, where their first visit was made the occasion of a military fête, conducted under the personal supervision of Comte Florent de Berlaimont. At Nivelles the Duc d'Arschot paid out of his own purse the cost of the brilliant festivities to which the people of Brabant flocked in order to bid their new rulers welcome, and himself led the procession, accompanied by the Archbishop of Malines and the Bishop of Antwerp. So they journeyed on amidst scenes of public rejoicing until they came to Brussels, where they established their Court in accordance with the customs and ceremonies which had been usual under the Dukes of Burgundy and the Kings of Spain.

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NIEUPORT Hall and Vicarage.



But when the Archdukes, as they were called, passed from town to town on this Royal progress, the phantoms of war, pestilence, and famine hung over the land. The great cities of Flanders had been deserted by thousands of their inhabitants. The sea trade of the country had been destroyed by the vigorous blockade which the Dutch ships of war maintained along the coast. Religious intolerance had driven the most industrious of the working classes to find a refuge in Holland or England. Villages lay in ruins, surrounded by untilled fields and gardens run to seed. Silent looms and empty warehouses were seen on every side. To such a pass had the disastrous policy of the Escorial brought this fair province of the Spanish Empire! From all parts of Flanders the cry for peace went up, but the time for peace was not yet come. [22]

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The new reign had just begun when Maurice of Nassau suddenly invaded Flanders with a great force, and laid siege to Nieuport, the garrison of which, reinforced by an army, at the head of which the Archduke Albert had hurried across Flanders, was under the command of the Archduke himself, and many Spanish Generals of great experience in the wars.

Though the Court at Brussels had been taken by surprise, the Dutch army was in a position of great danger. Part of it lay on the west side of the Yser, and part to the east, amongst the dunes near Lombaerdzyde and Westende, with a bridge of boats thrown across the river as their only connection. Their ships were at anchor close to the shore; but Prince Maurice frankly told his men that it was useless to think of embarking in case of defeat, and that, therefore, they must either win the day or perish there, for the Spaniards were before them under the protection of Nieuport, the river divided them, the sea was behind them, and it would be impossible for a beaten army to escape by retreating through the dunes in the direction of Ostend.

NIEUPORT The Quay, with Eel-boats and Landing-stages.



Such was the position of affairs beneath the walls of Nieuport at sunrise on July 2, 1600. The morning was spent by the Dutch in preparing for battle. Towards noon the Spanish leaders held a council of war, at which it was decided to attack the enemy as soon as possible, and about three o'clock the battle began. A stiff breeze from the west, blowing up the English Channel, drove clouds of sand into the eyes of the Spaniards, and the bright rays of the afternoon sun, shining in their faces as they advanced to the attack, dazzled and confused them. But, in spite of these disadvantages, it seemed at first as if the fortunes of the day were to go in their favour. [Pg 125]

The bridge of boats across the Yser was broken, and some of the Dutch regiments, seized by a sudden panic, began to retreat towards the sea; but, finding it impossible to reach the ships, they rallied, and began once more to fight with all the dogged courage of their race. For some hours the battle was continued with equal bravery on both sides, the Spaniards storming a battery which the Dutch had entrenched amongst the dunes, and the Dutch defending it so desperately that the dead and wounded lay piled in heaps around it. But at last the Spanish infantry were thrown into confusion by a charge of horsemen; the Archduke Albert was wounded, and had to retire from the front to have his injuries attended to. Prince Maurice ordered a general advance of all his army, and in a few minutes the enemy were fleeing from the battlefield, leaving behind them 3,000 dead, 800 prisoners, and more than 100 standards. The loss on the Dutch side was about 2,000. [Pg 126]

The Archduke Albert, who had narrowly escaped being himself taken prisoner, succeeded in entering Nieuport safely with what remained of his army. The town remained in the hands of the Spaniards, for Prince Maurice, after spending some days in vain attempts to capture it, marched with his whole force to Ostend, where soon afterwards began the celebrated siege, which was to last for three long years, and about which all Europe never tired of talking.^[23]

NIEUPOORT

The Town Hall.

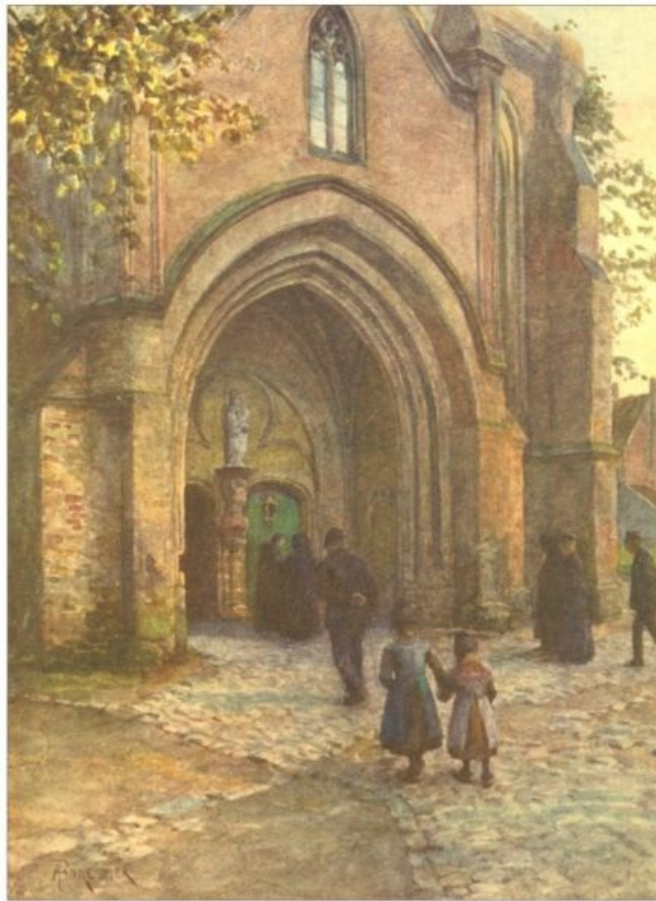


The history of Nieuport since those days has been the history of a gradual fall. Its sea trade disappeared slowly but surely; the fishing industry languished; the population decreased year by year; and it has not shared to any appreciable extent in the prosperity which has enriched other parts of Flanders since the Revolution of 1830. It is now a quiet, sleepy spot, with humble streets, which remind one of some fishing village on the east coast of Scotland. Men and women sit at the doors mending nets or preparing bait. The boats, with their black hulls and dark brown sails, move lazily up to the landing-stages, where a few small craft, trading along the coast, lie moored. Barges heavily laden with wood are pulled laboriously through the locks of the canals which connect the Yser with Ostend and Furnes. The ancient fortifications have long since disappeared, with the exception of a few grass-grown mounds; and only the grim tower of the Templars, standing by itself in a field on the outskirts of the town, remains to show that this insignificant place was once a mighty stronghold. [Pg 127]

In those old Flemish towns, however, it is always possible to find something picturesque; and here we have the Cloth Hall, with its low arches openin on the market-place, and the Gothic church, one of the largest in Flanders, with its porch and tower, where the bell-ringers play the chimes and the people pass devoutly to the services of the church. But that is all. Nieuport has few attractions nowadays, and is chiefly memorable in Flemish history because under its walls they fought that bloody 'Battle of the Dunes,' in which the stubborn strength and obstinacy of the Dutch overcame the fiery valour of the Spaniards. [Pg 128]

They are all well-nigh forgotten now, obstinate Dutchman and valiant Spaniard alike. Amongst the dunes not a vestige remains of the field-works for which they fought. Bones, broken weapons and shattered breastplates, and all the débris of the fight, were long ago buried fathoms deep beneath mounds of drifting sand. Old Nieuport—Nieuport Ville, as they call it now—for which so much blood was shed, is desolate and dreary with its small industries and meagre commerce; but a short walk to the north brings us to Nieuport-Bains, and to the gay summer life which pulsates all along the Flemish coast, from La Panne on the west to the frontiers of Holland.

NIEUPORT
Church Porch (Evensong).



FOOTNOTES

- [21] De Gerlache, i. 260.
- [22] *L'Abbé Nameche*, xxi. 6-8.
- [23] 'Le siège d'Ostende fut, pendant ces trois ans, la fable et la nouvelle de l'Europe; on ne se lassait pas d'en parler. Des princes, des étrangers de toutes les nations venaient y assister.'—*L'Abbé Nameche*, xxi. 24.

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CHAPTER X THE COAST OF FLANDERS

To walk from Nieuport Ville to the Digue de Mer at Nieuport-Bains is to pass in a few minutes from the old Flanders, the home of so much romance, the scene of so many stirring deeds, from the market-places with the narrow gables heaped up in piles around them, from the belfries soaring to the sky, from the winding streets and the narrow lanes, in which the houses almost touch each other, from the tumble-down old hostelries, from the solemn aisles where the candles glimmer and the dim red light glows before the altar, from the land of Bras-de-Fer, and Thierry d'Alsace, and Memlinc, and Van Eyck, and Rubens, the land which was at once the Temple and the Golgotha of Europe, into the clear, broad light of modern days.

The Flemish coast, from the frontiers of France to the frontiers of Holland, is throughout the same in appearance. The sea rolls in and breaks upon the yellow beach, which extends from east to west for some seventy kilometres in an irregular line, unbroken by rocks or cliffs. Above the beach are the dunes, a long range of sandhills, tossed into all sorts of queer shapes by the wind, on which nothing grows but rushes or stunted Lombardy poplars, and which reach their highest point, the Hoogen-Blekker, about 100 feet above the sea, near Coxyde, a fishing village four or five miles from Nieuport. Behind the dunes a strip of undulating ground ('Ter Streep'), seldom more than a bare mile in width, covered with scanty vegetation, moss, and bushes, connects the barren sandhills with the cultivated farms, green fields, and woodlands of the Flemish plain. On the other side of the Channel the chalk cliffs and rocky coast of England have kept the waves in check; but the dunes were, for many long years, the only barrier against the encroachments of the sea on Flanders. They are, however, a very weak defence against the storms of autumn and winter. The sand drifts like snow before the wind, and the outlines of these miniature mountain ranges change often in a single night. At one time, centuries ago, this part of Flanders, which is now so bare, was, it is pretty clear, covered by forests, the remains of which are still sometimes found beneath the subsoil inland and under the sea. When the great change came is unknown, but the process was

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probably gradual. At an early period, here, as in Holland, the fight against the invasions of the sea began, and the first dykes are said to have been constructed in the tenth century. The first was known as the Evendyck, and ran from Heyst to Wenduyn. Others followed, but they were swept away, and now only a few traces of them are to be found, buried beneath the sand and moss.^[24]

THE DUNES A Stormy Evening.



The wild storms of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries changed the aspect of the coast of Flanders. Nieuport rose in consequence of one of these convulsions of Nature, when the inhabitants of Lombaerdzyde, which was then a seaport, were driven by the tempests to the inland village of Santhoven, the name of which they changed to 'Neoportus'—the new harbour. This was in the beginning of the twelfth century, and thenceforth the struggle against the waves went on incessantly. Lands were granted by Thierry d'Alsace on condition that the owner should construct dykes, and Baldwin of Constantinople appointed guardians of the shore, charged with the duty of watching the sea and constructing defensive works. But the struggle was carried on under the utmost difficulties. In the twelfth century the sea burst in with resistless force upon the low-lying ground, washing away the dunes and swallowing up whole towns. The inroads of the waves, the heavy rains, and the earthquakes, made life so unendurable that there were thousands who left their homes and emigrated to Germany.

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Later, in the thirteenth century, there was a catastrophe of appalling dimensions, long known as the 'Great Storm,' when 40,000 Flemish men and women perished. This was the same tempest which overran the Dutch coast, and formed the Zuyder Zee, those 1,400 square miles of water which the Dutch are about to reclaim and form again into dry land. In the following century the town of Scarphout, in West Flanders, was overwhelmed, and the inhabitants built a new town for themselves on higher ground, and called it Blankenberghe, which is now one of the most important watering-places on the coast.

Ever since those days this constant warfare against the storms has continued, and the sea appears to be bridled; but anyone who has watched the North Sea at high tide on a stormy day beating on the shores of Flanders, and observed how the dunes yield to the pressure of the wind and waves, and crumble away before his eyes, must come to the conclusion that the peril of the ocean is not yet averted, and can understand the meaning of the great modern works, the *digues de mer*, or sea-fronts, as they would be called in England, which are being gradually constructed at such immense cost all along the coast.

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A most interesting and, indeed, wonderful thing in the recent history of the Netherlands is the rapid development of the Flemish littoral from a waste of sand, with here and there a paltry fishing hamlet and two or three small towns, into a great cosmopolitan pleasure resort. Seventy-five years ago, when Belgium became an independent country, and King Leopold I. ascended the throne, Ostend and Nieuport were the only towns upon the coast which were of any size; but Ostend was then a small fortified place, with a harbour wholly unsuited for modern commerce, and Nieuport, in a state of decadence, though it possessed a harbour, was a place of no importance. To-day the whole coast is studded with busy watering-places, about twenty of them, most of which have come into existence within the last fifteen years, with a resident population of about 60,000, which is raised by visitors in summer to, it is said, nearly 125,000. The dunes, which the old Counts of Flanders fought so hard to preserve from the waves, and which were at the beginning of the present century mere wastes of sand, a sort of 'no man's land', of little or no use except for rabbit-shooting, are now valuable properties, the price of which is rising every year.

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The work of turning the sand into gold, for that is what the development of the Flemish coast comes to, has been carried out partly by the State and partly by private persons. In early times this belt of land upon the margin of the sea was held by the Counts of Flanders, who treated the ridge

of sandhills above high-water mark as a natural rampart against the waves, and granted large tracts of the flat ground which lay behind to various religious houses. At the French Revolution these lands were sold as Church property at a very low figure, and were afterwards allowed, in many cases, to fall out of cultivation by the purchasers. So great a portion of the district was sold that at the present time only a small portion of the dune land is the property of the State—the narrow strip between Mariakerke and Middelkerke on the west of Ostend, and that which lies between Ostend and Blankenberghe on the east. The larger portions, which are possessed by private owners, are partly the property of the descendants of those who bought them at the Revolution, and partly of building societies, incorporated for the purpose of developing what Mr. Hall Caine once termed the 'Visiting Industry'—that is to say, the trade in tourists and seaside visitors.^[25]

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AN OLD FARMER



Plage de Westende, Le Coq, and Duinbergen—three charming summer resorts—have been created by building societies. Nieuport-Bains and La Panne have been developed by the owners of the adjoining lands, the families of Crombez and Calmeyn. Wenduïne, on the other hand, which lies between Le Coq and Blankenberghe, has been made by the State, while the management of Blankenberghe, Heyst, and Middelkerke, as bathing stations, is in the hands of their communal councils.

On the coast of Flanders, Ostend—'La Reine des Plages'—is, it need hardly be said, the most important place, and its rise has been very remarkable. Less than fifty years ago the population was in all about 15,000. During the last fifteen years it has increased by nearly 15,000, and now amounts to about 40,000 in round numbers. The increase in the number of summer visitors has been equally remarkable. In the year 1860 the list of strangers contained 9,700 names; three years ago it contained no less than 42,000. This floating population of foreign visitors who come to Ostend is cosmopolitan to an extent unknown at any watering-place in England. In 1902 11,000 English, 8,000 French, 5,000 Germans, and 2,000 Americans helped to swell the crowds who walked on the sea-front, frequented the luxurious and expensive hotels, or left their money on the gaming-tables at the Kursaal. On one day—August 15, 1902—7,000 persons bathed.^[26]

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Blankenberghe, with its 30,000 summer visitors, comes next in importance to Ostend, while both Heyst and Middelkerke are crowded during the season. But the life at these towns is not so agreeable as at the smaller watering-places. The hotels are too full, and have, as a rule, very little except their cheapness to recommend them. There is usually a body calling itself the *comité des fêtes*, the members of which devote themselves for two months every summer to devising amusements, sports, and competitions of various kinds, instead of leaving people to amuse themselves in their own way, so that hardly a day passes on which the strains of a second-rate band are not heard in the local Kursaal, or a night which is not made hideous by a barrel-organ, to which the crowd is dancing on the *digue*. At the smaller places, however, though these also have their *comités des fêtes*, one escapes to a great extent from these disagreeable surroundings.

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May, June, and September are the pleasantest months upon the coast of Flanders, for the visitors are not so numerous, and even in mid-winter the dunes are worth a visit. Then the hotels and villas fronting the sea are closed, and their windows boarded up. The bathing-machines are removed from the beach, and stand in rows in some sheltered spot. The *digue*, a broad extent of level brickwork, is deserted, and the wind sweeps along it, scattering foam and covering it with sand and sprays of tangled seaweed. The mossy surface of the dunes is frozen hard as iron, and often the hailstones rush in furious blasts before the wind. For league after league there is not a sign of life, except the seabirds flying low near the shore, or the ships rising and falling in the waves far

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out to sea. In the winter months the coast of Flanders is bleak and stormy, but the air in these solitudes is as health-giving as in any other part of Europe.

Of late years the Government, represented by Comte de Smet de Naeyer, has bestowed much attention on the development of the littoral, and King Leopold II. has applied his great business talents to the subject. Large sums of money have been voted by the Belgian Parliament for the construction of public works and the extension of the means of communication from place to place. There is a light railway, the 'Vicinal,' which runs along the whole coast, at a short distance from the shore, from Knocke, on the east, to La Panne in the extreme west, and which is connected with the system of State railways at various points. From Ostend, through Middelkerke, to Plage de Westende, an electric railway has been constructed, close to the beach and parallel to the Vicinal (which is about a mile inland), on which trains run every ten minutes during the summer season. As an instance of the speed and energy with which these works for the convenience of the public are carried out, when once they have been decided upon, it may be mentioned that the contract for the portion of the electric line between Middelkerke and Plage de Westende, a distance of about a mile and a half, was signed on May 9, that five days later 200 workmen began to cut through the dunes, embank and lay the permanent way, and that on June 25, in spite of several interruptions owing to drifting sand and heavy rains, the first train of the regular service arrived at Plage de Westende.

LA PANNE Interior of a Flemish Inn.



A large sum, amounting to several millions of francs, is voted every year for the protection of the shores of Flanders against the encroachments of the sea, by the construction of these solid embankments of brickwork and masonry, which will, in the course of a few years, extend in an unbroken line along the whole coast from end to end. The building of these massive sea-walls is a work of great labour and expense, for what seems to be an impregnable embankment, perhaps 30 feet high and 90 feet broad, solid and strong enough to resist the most violent breakers, will be undermined and fall to pieces in a few hours, if not made in the proper way. A *digue*, no matter how thick, which rests on the sand alone will not last. A thick bed of green branches bound together must first be laid down as a foundation: this is strengthened by posts driven through it into the sand. Heavy timbers, resting on bundles of branches lashed together, are wedged into the foundations, and slope inwards and upwards to within a few feet of the height to which it is intended to carry the *digue*. On the top another solid bed of branches is laid down, and the whole is first covered with concrete, and then with bricks or tiles, while the edge of the *digue*, at the top of the seaward slope, is composed of heavy blocks of stone cemented together and bound by iron rivets.

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Digues made in this solid fashion, all of them higher above the shore than the Thames Embankment is above the river, and some of them broader than the Embankment, will, before very many years have passed, stretch along the whole coast of Flanders without a break, and will form not only a defence against the tides, but a huge level promenade, with the dunes on one side and the sea on the other. This is a gigantic undertaking, but it will be completed during the lifetime of the present generation.

LA PANNE A Flemish Inn—Playing Skittles.



Another grandiose idea, which is actually being carried into effect, is to connect all the seaside resorts on the coast of Flanders by a great boulevard, 40 yards wide, with a road for carriages and pedestrians, a track for motor-cars and bicycles, and an electric railway, all side by side. Large portions of this magnificent roadway, which is to be known as the 'Route Royale,' have already been completed between Blankenberghe and Ostend, and from Ostend to Plage de Westende. From Westende it will be continued to Nieuport-Bains, crossing the Yser by movable bridges, and thence to La Panne, and so onwards, winding through the dunes, over the French borders, and perhaps as far as Paris!

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A single day's journey through the district which this 'Route Royale' is to traverse will lead the traveller through the most interesting part of the dunes, and introduce him to most of the favourite *plages* on the coast of Flanders, and thus give him an insight into many characteristic Flemish scenes. La Panne, for instance, and Adinkerque, in the west and on the confines of France, are villages inhabited by fishermen who have built their dwellings in sheltered places amongst the dunes. The low white cottages of La Panne, with the strings of dried fish hanging on the walls, nestle in the little valley from which the place takes its name (for *panne* in Flemish means 'a hollow'), surrounded by trees and hedges, gay with wild roses in the summer-time. Each cottage stands in its small plot of garden ground, and most of the families own fishing-boats of their own, and farm a holding which supplies them with potatoes and other vegetables.

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For a long time these cottages were the only houses at La Panne, which was seldom visited, except by a few artists; but about fifteen years ago the surveyors and the architects made their appearance, paths and roads were laid out, and, as if by magic, cottages and villas and the inevitable *digue de mer* have sprung up on the dunes near the sea, and not very far from the original village. The chief feature of the new La Panne is that the houses are, except those on the sea-front, built on the natural levels of the ground, some perched on the tops of the dunes, and others in the hollows which separate them. The effect is extremely picturesque, and the example of the builders of La Panne is being followed at other places, notably at Duinbergen, one of the very latest bathing stations, which has risen during the last three years about a mile to the east of Heyst.

Another very interesting place is the Plage de Westende, the present terminus of the electric railway from Ostend. The old village of Westende lies a mile inland on the highway between Nieuport and Ostend, close to the scene of the Battle of the Dunes. This Plage is, indeed, a model seaside resort, with a *digue* which looks down upon a shore of the finest sand, and from which, of an evening, one sees the lights of Ostend in the east, and the revolving beacon at Dunkirk shining far away to the west. The houses which front the sea, all different from each other, are in singularly good taste; and behind them are a number of detached cottages and villas, large and small, in every variety of design. Ten years ago the site of this little town was a rabbit warren; now everything is up to date: electric light in every house, perfect drainage, a good water-supply, tennis courts, and an admirable hotel, where even the passing stranger feels at home. Though only three-quarters of an hour from noisy, crowded, bustling Ostend by the railway, it is one of the quietest and most comfortable places on the coast of Flanders, and can be reached by travellers from England in a few hours.

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Some years hence the lovely, peaceful Plage de Westende may have grown too big, but when the sand has all been turned into gold, and when the contractors and builders have grown rich, those who have known Westende in its earlier days will think of it as the quiet spot about which at one time only a few people used to stroll; where perhaps the poet Verhaeren found something to inspire him; where many a long summer's evening was spent in pleasant talk on history, and painting, and music by a little society of men and women who spoke French, or German, or English, as the fancy took them, and laughed, and quoted, and exchanged ideas on every subject

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under the sun; where the professor of music once argued, and sprang up to prove his point by playing—but that is an allusion, or, as Mr. Kipling would say, 'another story.'

The district in which Westende lies, with Lombaerdzyde, Nieuport, Furnes, and Coxyde close together, is the most interesting on the coast of Flanders. Le Coq, on the other hand, is in that part of the dune country which has least historical interest, and is chiefly known as the place where the Royal Golf Club de Belgique has its course. It is only twenty minutes from Ostend on the Vicinal railway, which has a special station for golfers near the Club House. There is no *digue*, and the houses are dotted about in a valley behind the dunes. This place has a curious resemblance to a Swiss village.

A few years ago the owners of lands upon the Flemish littoral began to grasp the fact that there was a sport called golf, on which Englishmen were in the habit of spending money, and that it would be an addition to the attractions of Ostend if, beside the racecourse, there was a golf-course. King Leopold, who is said to contemplate using all the land between the outskirts of Ostend and Le Coq for sporting purposes, paid a large sum, very many thousands of francs, out of his own pocket, and the golf-links at Le Coq were laid out. The Club House is handsome and commodious, but, unfortunately, the course itself, which is the main thing, is not very satisfactory, being far too artificial. The natural 'bunkers' were filled up, and replaced by ramparts and ditches like those on some inland courses in England. On the putting greens the natural undulations of the ground have been levelled, and the greens are all as flat and smooth as billiard-tables. There are clumps of ornamental wood, flower-beds, and artificial ponds with goldfish swimming in them. It is all very pretty, but it is hardly golf. What with the 'Grand Prix d'Ostende,' the 'Prix des Roses,' the 'Prix des Ombrelles,' handicap libre, réservé aux Dames,' the 'Grand Prix des Dames,' and a number of other *objets d'art*, which are offered for competition on almost every day from the beginning of June to the end of September, this is a perfect paradise for the pot-hunter and his familiar friend Colonel Bogey. Real golf, the strenuous game, which demands patience and steady nerves, perhaps, more than any other outdoor game, is not yet quite understood by many Belgians; but the bag of clubs is every year becoming more common on the Dover mail-boats.

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Most of these golf-bags find their way to Knocke, where many of the English colony at Bruges spend the summer, and which, as the coast of Flanders becomes better known, is visited every year by increasing numbers of travellers from the other side of the Channel. Knocke is in itself one of the least attractive places on the Flemish littoral. The old village, a nondescript collection of houses, lies on the Vicinal railway about a mile from the sea, which is reached by a straight roadway, and where there is a *digue*, numerous hotels, pensions, and villas, all of which are filled to overflowing in the season. The air, indeed, is perfect, and there are fine views from the *digue* and the dunes of the island of Walcheren, Flushing, and the estuary of the Scheldt; but the place was evidently begun with no definite plan: the dunes were ruthlessly levelled, and the result is a few unlovely streets, and a number of detached houses standing in disorder amidst surroundings from which everything that was picturesque has long since departed.

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But the dunes to the east are wide, and enclose a large space of undulating ground; and here the Bruges Golf and Sports Club has its links, which present a very complete contrast to the Belgian course at Le Coq. The links at Knocke, if somewhat rough and ready, are certainly sporting in the highest degree. Some of the holes, those in what is known as the Green Valley, are rather featureless; but in the other parts of the course there are numerous natural hazards, bunkers, and hillocks thick with sand and rushes. It has no pretensions to be a 'first-class' course (for one thing, it is too short), but in laying out the eighteen holes the ground has been utilized to the best advantage, and the Royal and Ancient game flourishes more at Knocke than at any other place in Belgium. The owners of the soil and the hotel-keepers, with a keen eye to business, and knowing that the golfing alone brings the English, from whom they reap a golden harvest, to Knocke, do all in their power to encourage the game, and it is quite possible that before long other links may be established along the coast. The soil of the strip behind the dunes is not so suitable for golf as the close turf of St. Andrews, North Berwick, or Prestwick, for in many places it consists of sand with a slight covering of moss; but with proper treatment it could probably be improved and hardened. It is merely a question of money, and money will certainly be forthcoming if the Government, the communes, and the private owners once see that this form of amusement will add to the popularity of the littoral.

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A short mile's walk to the west of Knocke brings us to Duinbergen, one of the newest of the Flemish *plages*, founded in the year 1901 by the Société Anonyme de Duinbergen, a company in which some members of the Royal Family are said to hold shares. At Knocke and others of the older watering-places everything was sacrificed to the purpose of making money speedily out of every available square inch of sand, and the first thing done was to destroy the dunes. But at Duinbergen the good example set by the founders of La Panne has been followed and improved upon, and nothing could be more *chic* than this charming little place, which was planned by Herr Stübben, of Cologne, an architect often employed by the King of the Belgians, whose idea was to create a small garden city among the dunes. The dunes have been carefully preserved; the roads and pathways wind round them; most of the villas and cottages have been erected in places from which a view of the sea can be obtained; and even the *digue* has been built in a curve in order to avoid the straight line, which is apt to give an air of monotony to the rows of villas, however picturesque they may be in themselves, which face the sea at other places. So artistic is the appearance of the houses that the term 'Style Duinbergen' is used by architects to describe it. Electric lighting, a copious supply of water rising by gravitation to the highest houses, and a complete system of drainage, add to the luxuries and comforts of this *plage*, which is one of the best illustrations of the wonders which have been wrought among the dunes by that spirit of enterprise which has done so much for modern Flanders during the last few years.

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FOOTNOTES

- [24] Bortier, *Le Littoral de la Flandre au IX^e et au XIX^e Siècles*.
- [25] Letter to the Manx Reform League, November, 1903.
- [26] I give these figures on the authority of M. Paul Otlet, Advocate, of Brussels, to whom I am indebted for much information regarding the development of the coast of Flanders. See also an article by M. Otlet in *Le Cottage*, May 15 to June 15, 1904.

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CHAPTER XI COXYDE—THE SCENERY OF THE DUNES

THE whole of the coast-line is within the province of West Flanders, and its development in recent years is the most striking fact in the modern history of the part of Belgium with which this volume deals. The change which has taken place on the littoral during the last fifteen or twenty years is extraordinary, and the contrast between the old Flanders and the new, between the Flanders which lingers in the past and the Flanders which marches with the times, is brought vividly before us by the difference between such mediæval towns as Bruges, Furnes, or Nieuport, and the bright new places which glitter on the sandy shores of the Flemish coast. But in almost every corner of the dunes, close to these signs of modern progress, there is something to remind us of that past history which is, after all, the great charm of Flanders. One of the most characteristic spots in the land of the dunes is the village of Coxyde, which lies low amongst the sandhills, about five miles west from Nieuport, out of sight of the sea, but inhabited by a race of fisherfolk who, curiously enough, pursue their calling on horseback. Mounted on their little horses, and carrying baskets and nets fastened to long poles, they go into the sea to catch small fish and shrimps. It is strange to see them riding about in the water, sometimes in bands, but more frequently alone or in pairs; and this curious custom, which has been handed down from father to son for generations, is peculiar to the part of the coast which lies between La Panne and the borders of France.

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Near Coxyde, and at the corner where the road from Furnes turns in the direction of La Panne, is a piece of waste ground which travellers on the Vicinal railway pass without notice. But here once stood the famous Abbey of the Dunes.

COXYDE A Shrimper on Horseback.



In the first years of the twelfth century a pious hermit named Lyger took up his abode in these solitary regions, built a dwelling for himself, and settled down to spend his life in doing good works and in the practice of religion. Soon, as others gathered round him, his dwelling grew into a monastery, and at last, in the year 1122, the Abbey of the Dunes was founded. It was nearly half a century before the great building, which is said to have been the first structure of such a size built of brick in Flanders, was completed; but when at last the work was done the Abbey was, by all accounts, one of the most magnificent religious houses in Flanders, consisting of a group of buildings with no less than 105 windows, a rich and splendid church, so famous for its ornamental woodwork that the carvings of the stalls were reproduced in the distant Abbey of Melrose in Scotland, and a library which, as time went on, became a storehouse of precious manuscripts and hundreds of those wonderfully illustrated missals on which the monks of the Middle Ages spent so many laborious hours. We can imagine them in the cells of Coxyde copying and copying for hours together, or bending over the exquisitely coloured drawings which are still preserved in the museums of Flanders.

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But their most useful work was done on the lands which lay round the Abbey. There were at Coxyde in the thirteenth century no fewer than 150 monks and 248 converts engaged at one time in cultivating the soil.^[27] They drained the marshes, and planted seeds where seeds would grow, until, after years of hard labour on the barren ground, the Abbey of the Dunes was surrounded by wide fields which had been reclaimed and turned into a fertile oasis in the midst of that savage and inhospitable desert.

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When St. Bernard was preaching the Crusade in Flanders he came to Coxyde. On his advice the monks adopted the Order of the Cistercians, and their first abbot under the new rule afterwards sat in the chair of St. Bernard himself as Abbot of Clairvaux. Thereafter the Cistercian Abbey of the Dunes grew in fame, especially under the rule of St. Idesbaldus, who had come there from Furnes, where he had been a Canon of the Church of Ste. Walburge. 'It has also a special interest for English folk. It long held lands in the isle of Sheppey, as well as the advowson of the church of Eastchurch, in the same island. These were bestowed on it by Richard the Lion-Hearted. The legend says that these gifts were made to reward its sixth abbot, Elias, for the help he gave in releasing Richard from captivity. Anyhow, Royal charters, and dues from the Archbishop of Canterbury, and a Bull of Pope Celestine III., confirmed the Abbey in its English possessions and privileges. The Abbey seems to have derived little benefit from these, and finally, by decision of a general congregation of the Cistercian Order, handed them over to the Abbot and Chapter of Bexley, to recoup the latter for the cost of entertaining monks of the Order going abroad, or returning from the Continent, on business of the Order.'^[28]

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COXYDE A shrimper



The English invasion of the fifteenth century destroyed the work of the monks in their fields and gardens, but the Abbey itself was spared; and the great disaster did not come until a century later,

when the image-breakers, who had begun their work amongst the Gothic arches of Antwerp, spread over West Flanders, and descended upon Coxyde. The Abbey was attacked, and the monks fled to Bruges, carrying with them many of their treasures, which are still to be seen in the collection on the Quai de la Poterie, beyond the bridge which is called the Pont des Dunes. The noble building, so long the home of so much piety and learning, and from which so many generations of apostles had gone forth to toil in the fields and minister to the poor, was abandoned, and allowed to fall into ruins, until at last it gradually sunk into complete decay, and was buried beneath the sands. Not a trace of it now remains. History has few more piteous sermons to preach on the vanity of all the works of men.

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The fishermen on the coast of Flanders have, from remote times, paid their vows in the hour of danger to Notre Dame de Lombaerdzyde. If they escape from some wild storm they go on a pilgrimage of thanksgiving. They walk in perfect silence along the road to the shrine, for not a word must be spoken till they reach it; and these hardy seafaring men may be seen kneeling at the altar of the old, weather-beaten church which stands on the south side of the highway through the village, and in which are wooden models of ships hung up as votive offerings before an image of the Virgin, which is the object of peculiar veneration. The Madonna of Lombaerdzyde did not prevail to keep the sea from invading the village at the time when the inhabitants were driven to Nieuport, but the belief in her miraculous power is as strong to-day as it was in the Dark Ages.

ADINKERQUE **Village and Canal.**



There is a view of Lombaerdzyde which no one strolling on the dunes near Nieuport should fail to see—a perfect picture, as typical of the scenery in these parts as any landscape chosen by Hobbema or Ruysdael. A causeway running straight between two lofty dunes of bare sand, and bordered by stunted trees, forms a long vista at the end of which Lombaerdzyde appears—a group of red-roofed houses, with narrow gables and white walls, and in the middle the pointed spire of the church, beyond which the level plain of Flanders, dotted with other villages and churches and trees in formal rows, stretches away into the distance until it merges in the horizon. Adinkerque, a picturesque village beyond Furnes, is another place which calls to mind many a picture of the Flemish artists in the Musée of Antwerp and the Mauritshuis at The Hague; and the recesses of the dune country in which these places are hidden has a wonderful fascination about it—the irregular outlines of the dunes, some high and some low, sinking here into deep hollows of firm sand, and rising there into strange fantastic shapes, sometimes with sides like small precipices on which nothing can grow, and sometimes sloping gently downwards and covered with trembling poplars, spread in confusion on every side. Often near the shore the sandy barrier has been broken down by the wind or by the waves, and a long gully formed, which cuts deep into the dunes, and through which the sand drifts inland till it reaches a steep bank clothed with rushes, against which it heaps itself, and so, rising higher with the storms of each winter, forms another dune. This process has been going on for ages. The sands are for ever shifting, but moss begins to grow in sheltered spots; such wild flowers as can flourish there bloom and decay; the poplars shed their leaves, and nourish by imperceptible degrees the fibres of the moss; some hardy grasses take root; and at length a scanty greensward appears. By such means slowly, in the microcosm of the dunes, have been evolved out of the changing sands places fit for men to live in, until now along the strip which guards the coast of Flanders there are green glades gay with flowers, and shady dells, and gardens sheltered from the wind, plots of pasture-land, cottages and churches which seem to grow out of the landscape, their colouring so harmonizes with the colouring which surrounds them. And ever, close at hand, the sea is rolling in and falling on the shore. 'Come unto these yellow sands,'

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and when the sun is going down, casting a long bar of burnished gold across the water, against which, perhaps, the sail of some boat looms dark for a moment and then passes on, the sky glows in such a lovely, tender light that those who watch it must needs linger till the twilight is fading away before they turn their faces inland. There are few evenings for beauty like a summer evening on the shores of Flanders.

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FOOTNOTES

- [27] Derode, *Histoire Religieuse de la Flandre Maritime*, p. 86.
[28] Robinson, *Bruges, an Historical Sketch*, p. 176.

EAST FLANDERS AND BRABANT

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EAST FLANDERS AND BRABANT

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CHAPTER XII GHENT

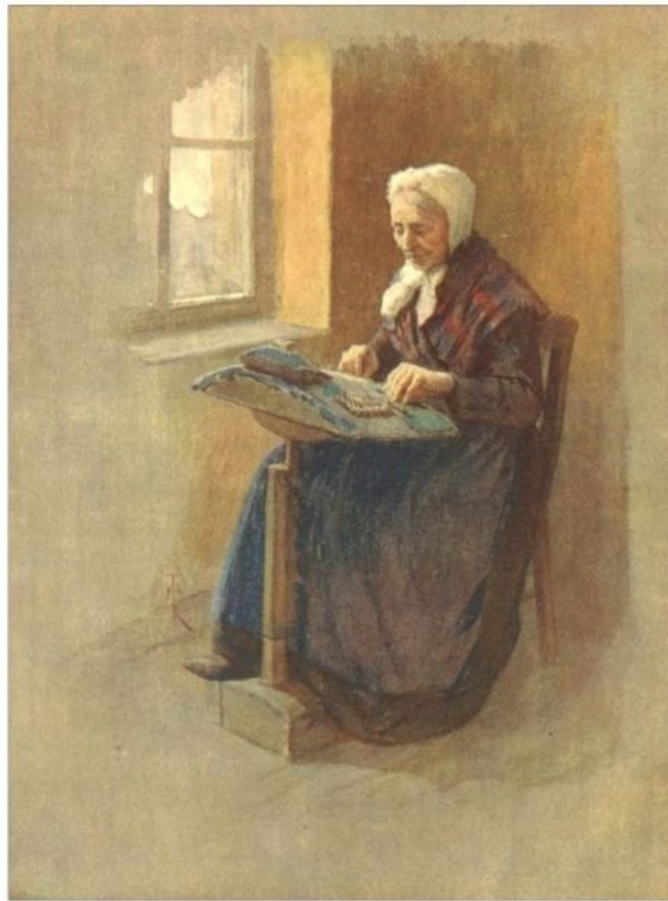
FROM Bruges, the capital of West Flanders, to Ghent, the capital of East Flanders, it is only half an hour's journey by rail; but the contrast between them is remarkable. Bruges is a city of the dead, of still life, of stagnant waters, of mouldering walls and melancholy streets, long since fallen from its high estate into utter decay. Ghent, on the other hand, is active, bustling, prosperous. The narrow lanes and gloomy courts of mediæval times have, in many parts, been swept away to make room for broad, well-lighted streets and squares, through which electric trams, crowded with busy people, run incessantly all day long. Bruges is known as 'La Morte.' Ghent is often called 'La Ville de Flore,' from the numerous gardens and hot-houses which supply plants to the markets of France, Germany, America, and other countries. Other branches of industry thrive. The trade in flax, linen, leather goods, engines, and lace, is large and flourishing. There are warehouses packed full of articles of commerce waiting to be sent off by canal or railway, and yards piled high with wood from North America, or bags of Portland cement from England.

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Two great canals, one connecting the town with the estuary of the Scheldt near the sea, and the other leading, through Bruges, to Ostend, admit merchant vessels and huge barges to a commodious harbour, where steam cranes and all the appliances of a busy seaport are in full swing. There never is a crowd in Bruges, except during the yearly Procession of the Holy Blood; but every day in Ghent, if by chance a drawbridge over one of the canals is raised, a crowd of working people gathers to wait impatiently while some deeply-laden barge passes slowly through, and, the moment the passage is free, rushes over in haste. These are Flemings in a hurry. One never sees them in Bruges.

Ghent, then, is a modern commercial town; but, in spite of all the changes which time and progress have brought about, it is, like most of the other Flemish towns, full of sights which carry us back in a moment to the distant past.

GHENT AN old lace-maker.



The Lys and the Scheldt, winding through Belgium from west to east, meet almost in the centre of the province of East Flanders; and at the point where they join a number of islands have been formed by numerous channels, pools, and backwaters which are connected with the two rivers. In early times, no doubt, the spot was nothing but a morass, and on one of the pieces of drier ground the first wooden houses of Ghent were erected. After that, during the course of centuries, the town spread from island to island, and as each island was occupied a bridge was built, so that by degrees between twenty and thirty islands, joined by a number of bridges, were covered with dwelling-houses and public buildings, and the whole surrounded by a wall and moat. [Pg 165]

But long before buildings of brick or stone replaced the dark wooden houses, of which only one now remains, the people of Ghent had acquired the character of being the most intractable of all the Flemings; and when Philip of Alsace, Count of Flanders, came back from the Holy Land, towards the end of the twelfth century, he erected, on the site of an old fortress which Baldwin Bras -de-Fer had built 200 years before, a strong castle for the purpose of overawing the townsmen. [Pg 166]

On the left bank of the Lys, which, passing through the middle of the town, threads its way close under the basements of the houses, is the Place Ste. Pharaïlde, with its picturesque buildings of the Middle Ages; and on the north side of this Place stand the massive remains of the old stronghold.

It is a grim, forbidding place, now known as the Château des Comtes. On three sides high black walls rise straight out of the water, and on the fourth side a deep archway leads into a large courtyard, in the middle of which is the donjon, said to date from the ninth century. There is a vast, dim banquet-hall, with an immense chimney-piece, and small windows with stone seats sunk deep in the walls, where King Edward III. of England and Queen Philippa feasted with Jacques van Artevelde in the year 1339, during the war with France. Dark, narrow staircases lead from story to story within the thickness of the walls, or wind up through turrets pierced with small windows a few inches square. Far down in the foundations are dismal oubliettes and torture-chambers; and in one corner of what is supposed to have been a prison is an iron-bound chest full of the skeletons of persons who suffered in the religious troubles of the sixteenth century. This gloomy place, once the abode of so much cruelty, is one of the most interesting sights in Ghent.

GHENT

THE Banquet Hall, Château des Comtes.



Charles V. was born at Ghent in the Cour des Princes, a magnificent palace, of which nothing but a single gateway now remains. John of Gaunt (or Ghent) was born here, too. Here took place the marriage of the Archduke Maximilian to Mary of Burgundy, which gave the Netherlands to the House of Austria. And here, in the Carthusian monastery in the Rue des Chartreux, in a room which is now one of the refectories, Lord Gambier, as Ambassador for George III., signed, on Christmas Eve, 1814, the articles of peace which put an end to the war between Great Britain and the United States of America. [Pg 167]

Everywhere, however, in Flanders the chief connecting-link between the past and the present is to be found at the Hôtel de Ville, the centre of the civic life; and it would be hard to find in all the Netherlands, except at Brussels, a more splendid example of Gothic architecture than the north side of the Hôtel de Ville at Ghent.

Within, on the walls of a great hall, the Salle des États, is a tablet in memory of the famous 'Pacification of Ghent,' signed there in 1576, when the leaders of the Dutch and Catholic Netherlands united for the purpose of securing civil and religious liberty and the downfall of the Spanish oppression. Opposite this tablet is a window, through which one steps on to a small balcony where proclamations were made of war, or peace, or royal marriages, and laws were promulgated, in olden times. In another part of the building the twelve Catholics, thirteen Liberals, and fourteen Socialists, who (1907) make up the Council of to-day, meet and debate, in a Gothic hall of the fifteenth century, with the Burgomaster in the chair. The civil marriages, which by the Belgian Constitution of 1831 must always precede the religious ceremony in church, take place in an old chapel of 1574, where there is a large picture by Wauters of Mary of Burgundy asking the burghers of Ghent to pardon one of her Ministers. Just outside the door of this Salle des Mariages a painting of the last moments of Count Egmont and Count Horn hangs in a passage, with a roof 500 years old, leading to the offices of the Tramway Company. Thus the everyday business of the town is conducted in the midst of the memorials of the past. [Pg 168]

GHENT

BÉGUINAGE de Mont St. Amand.



In front of the balcony of the Hôtel de Ville there used to be a wide, open space, in which the burghers assembled; but now the ground is occupied by a row of houses (the Rue Haut-Port), intersected by narrow streets, one of which leads to the Marché de Vendredi, the scene of the greatest events in the history of Ghent. This is a large square, surrounded by a double row of trees, in the middle of which is a statue of Jacques van Artevelde, the 'Brewer of Ghent,' who stands with arm up-raised, pointing to the west, as if to show his fellow-citizens that help was coming from England, or that the enemy was on the march from France.

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Not far from the Hôtel de Ville the compact tower of St. Nicholas rises above the housetops; and the churches of St. Pierre, St. Michael, and St. Jacques are worth a visit. There is also the Béguinage de Ste. Élisabeth, a group of houses of dark red brick with tiled roofs, trim grass paddocks, and winding streets, clustering round a church—the quietest spot in Ghent, where five or six hundred Beguines, in their blue robes and white head-dresses, spend their days in making lace or attending the services of the Catholic Church. But the antiquary and student of history will find more to interest him if he makes his way to the Abbey of St. Bavon (birthplace of John of Gaunt), the ruins of which lie on the east side of the town, near the Porte d'Anvers.

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The tradition is that this abbey was founded, early in the seventh century, by St. Amandus, the 'Apostle of Flanders,' and enlarged, some twenty years later, by St. Bavon. In the middle of the ninth century it was almost entirely destroyed by the Normans, but rose once more at a later period, only to be demolished by Charles V., who erected a castle there about the year 1540. A quarter of a century later, on September 23, 1567, Egmont and Horn were brought here by the orders of Alva, and kept in prison until they were carried, 'guarded by two companies of infantry and one of cavalry,' to Brussels, where the execution took place, in the Grande Place, on June 5, 1568.

When the Congress of Ghent assembled in 1576, the castle was occupied by a Spanish garrison, who refused to capitulate. It was accordingly besieged by William of Orange, and 'the deliberations of the Congress were opened under the incessant roar of cannon.' The siege ended, by the surrender of the Spaniards, on the very day on which the sittings of the Congress were finished by the conclusion of the treaty known as the 'Pacification,' which was signed at Ghent on November 9, 1576.

GHENT

THE Arrière Faucille (Achter Sikkel).



'The Pacification, as soon as published, was received with a shout of joy. Proclaimed in the marketplace of every city and village, it was ratified, not by votes, but by hymns of thanksgiving, by triumphal music, by thundering of cannon, and by the blaze of beacons throughout the Netherlands.'^[29] The Castle, a monument of the Spanish tyranny, was pulled down; but many fragments still remain of the ancient Abbey of St. Bavon.

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In the first quarter of the fifteenth century Hubert van Eyck and his brother Jan were living at Ghent. Here Hubert began to paint the celebrated altarpiece, 'The Adoration of the Immaculate Lamb,' which his brother finished after his death. This great painting, having survived the greed of Philip II., the fanaticism of the Puritan iconoclasts, and the rapacity of the French revolutionary army, now hangs in the Cathedral of St. Bavon; and every year hundreds of travellers visit Ghent in order to see what is, beyond doubt, the finest production of the Early Flemish School. In the choir, too, of the Cathedral are four huge candlesticks of copper, which were originally made as ornaments for the grave of Henry VIII. at Windsor, but were sold during the Commonwealth.

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In 1500 the infant who afterwards became the Emperor Charles V. was carried from the Cour des Princes to the Cathedral. 'His baptism,' we read in local history, 'was celebrated with right royal pomp in the Church of St. Bavon. Great rejoicings signalized the event. The fountains lavishly sent up streams of purple wine from their fantastic jets, "mysteries" and mummeries, masks and merry-makings, usurped for a time the place of commerce and earnest speculation. The brave and steady citizens of Ghent ran riot from the house, and never was Venice herself more wild in the days of her maddest carnival. We are told that a magic gallery, 200 feet long, which was maintained during this temporary jubilee in a state of sufficient security to insure the safety of the thousands who thronged it, was erected at a giddy height across the streets, connecting the tower of the great Belfry with that of the Church of St. Nicholas. This was, for three consecutive nights, profusely illuminated, and threw a brilliant glow over the gay scene, in which all Ghent was revelling below.'

GHENT

THE ruins of the cloisters of the Abbey of St. Bavon.



In the time of Charles V., Ghent was not only the most powerful city in the rich Netherlands, but one of the most opulent in all Europe. And what the Belfry, whose chimes ring out with such sweet melody by night and day, was to Bruges, that was to the more warlike men of Ghent the 'iron tongue' of Roland, the mighty bell which hung in the lofty watch-tower. It called them to arms. It sent them forth to battle. It welcomed them home victorious, or bade them meet and defend their privileges in the market-place. 'It seemed, as it were, a living historical personage, endowed with the human powers and passions which it had so long directed and inflamed.'

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The Belfry of Ghent, black with age, still towers above the Cloth Hall. But when, in 1540, the Emperor went there for the purpose of humbling the town, and punishing the burghers for their disobedience, he made a decree that Roland, whose voice had so often given the signal for revolt, should be taken down. No greater insult could have been offered to the proud city.

Bruges fell into the decay from which she has never yet recovered chiefly because, at a time when the whole commerce of Flanders and Brabant was beginning to languish, she lost her communications with the sea; and Ypres was ruined by years of internal discord and constant war. But Ghent, the third of the three 'Bonnes Villes' of Flanders, though the industrial depression which spread over the Netherlands and the long struggle against Spain combined to ruin her, has come triumphant through all vicissitudes. In the old days the men of Ghent were famous for their turbulent spirit and love of independence. It was no easy task to rule them, as Counts of Flanders, or Dukes of Burgundy, or Kings of Spain often found to their cost. And now it seems as if the robust character of the burghers who fought so hard, in mediæval times, to maintain their liberties, had been merely turned into another channel, and transmitted to their descendants in the shape of that keen activity in commerce which makes this town so prosperous at the present day.

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FOOTNOTES

[29] Motley's *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, part iv., chap. v.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE DUKES OF BRABANT—THE JOYEUSE ENTRÉE—END OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

A few miles to the south-west of Alost, on the borders of East Flanders, the River Dendre, on its way to join the Scheldt, forms the boundary of Brabant. From Denderleeuw, the frontier station, to Brussels is about fifteen miles by train, through a district which gradually loses the bare flatness of the plains of Flanders, and becomes wooded, undulating, and hilly as we approach the city.

And Brussels is quite different from the fallen towns of Flanders. There are no mouldering ramparts here, and very few uneven causeways, but broad boulevards, shaded by trees; handsome modern houses; wooden pavements in some parts; a Bourse; arcades and bazaars; tempting shops, their windows decked with Parisian art; theatres and music-halls; glittering restaurants and expensive hotels. It is all modern, spacious, full of movement. While Bruges and Ypres live chiefly in the past, Brussels lives chiefly in the present and the future. But in the middle of the city is the

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famous Grande Place; and the tall houses, so gloriously picturesque with pointed gables and gilded cornices; and the exquisite Hôtel de Ville with its curiously carved façade and steep roof pierced by innumerable little windows, above which the graceful spire, that 'miracle of needlework in stone,' has towered for 500 years. Here, as everywhere in the Netherlands, the traditions of the past are imperishable; and we may look back and see how this bright, gay, pleasant city—the 'petit Paris,' as its people love to call it—rose and grew.

Old Brabant extended from beyond Tournai on the west to what is now the Dutch frontier beyond Turnhout on the east, and from the neighbourhood of Ghent nearly to Liège. Just north of the forest of Soignies a ridge of undulating hills overlooked the little River Senne, which wound along eastwards through sandbanks and brushwood. On an island in this stream, according to tradition, a chapel was built by St. Gery, Bishop of Cambrai; a watch-tower, afterwards named the Tower of St. Nicholas, was erected on a hillock near the island; wooden houses, with thatched roofs, began to appear on the banks and here and there on the up which steep hillside pathways, afterwards to become streets, clambered towards a promontory called the Coudenberg, or Cold Mountain; a market was established; and the village became known as Bruxelles, or (at least so it is said) 'the house in the swamp,' from *bruc*, swamp, and *celle*, house.

BRUSSELS

PLACE de Brouckère.



From a long time, in the early tales about Brabant, there are the usual legends of warriors and saints; but when we reach the period of authentic history there are four chief towns, Louvain, Brussels, Antwerp, and Bois-le-Duc. Of these the most important was Louvain. In 1190 the Counts of Louvain became Dukes of Brabant. They built a castle on the Coudenberg, and for the next 300 years the Court of Brabant was celebrated for its power and splendour.

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Lying in the midst of a fertile district, and on the trade-route from Flanders to Germany, Brussels was a convenient stopping-place for travellers. But in the Middle Ages, when Bruges, Ghent, Ypres, and other places were so prosperous, the history of Brussels is less eventful; and it was only when the famous Flemish cities were about to fall that the town on the Senne became an important centre of industry. Its population, too, increased rapidly, owing to the numbers of workmen who came from Louvain in consequence of commercial troubles there.

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So trade flourished, and Brussels grew rich; but the continual wars which desolated France, the chief market for the manufactures of the Netherlands, did harm to the linen trade, which suffered also from the keen competition of English merchants. The raw material came from England, and by prohibiting the exportation of wool England was able to wellnigh ruin this branch of the trade of Flanders and Brabant. Fortunately, however, for Brussels, the introduction of new industries at this critical time made the damage to the linen trade less fatal, and with the growth of flax-weaving, the art of tapestry-making, dye-works, and the production of valuable armour, the town more than held its own.

Luxury and display followed, as usual, in the train of wealth, and Brussels became a city of pleasure, of fêtes, and gorgeous festivals. The Court of Brabant was one of the most luxurious and dissolute in Europe. The Dukes set an example of extravagance which was followed by the Barons who surrounded them, and also by the rich bourgeois. 'The people alone,' we are told, 'that is to say, the men without leisure, the artisans, remained apart from excesses.' There was luxury in dress, in armour, in furniture. The rich went about clad in gold brocades and other costly stuffs, attended by servants in fine liveries. Their horses were richly caparisoned, and their wives and daughters spent large sums on magnificent robes, and decked themselves with jewels, and garlands from the rose-gardens for which Brussels was already famous.

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Every occasion for a fête was eagerly welcomed. Not only was there the yearly 'Ommegang,' that time-honoured procession through the streets of triumphal cars, bands of music, and giants, which delighted the people of Brabant and Flanders, but each separate guild and confraternity had its own festival. In private life every event—a birth, a baptism, a marriage, or a death—was an excuse for spending money on display. To such an extent, indeed, was this carried, that rules were made forbidding invitations being sent except to near relatives, to prevent people going to fêtes without being asked, and at length even to put some limit on the value of the presents which it was customary to give to guests. The licentious and wasteful habits of the *jeunesse dorée* became so notorious, that there was a lock-up at each of the city gates for the benefit of young men who were living too fast. In such a state of society the money-lender saw his chance; but a law was passed making it illegal for anyone to sign a promissory note, or anticipate his inheritance, before reaching the age of twenty-eight. Brussels was full of taverns, and there were parts of the town where every house was occupied by women of easy virtue. Fortunes were recklessly squandered, and most of the nobles are said to have been insolvent, and to have left heavy debts behind them.

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Not a vestige remains of the wall which surrounded this mediæval Brussels except the Porte de Hal, at the corner where the modern Boulevard de Waterloo meets the Boulevard du Midi; and the Hôtel de Ville and the guild-houses in the Grande Place have undergone many changes since the fourteenth century. A great part of the Church of Ste. Gudule, however—the choir and transept, part of the nave, and the south aisle—was built in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; and during that period Notre Dame de la Chapelle and Notre Dame du Sablon rose on the foundations of more ancient churches. The houses, even of the rich, were still of wood, with sometimes a tower of stone, built irregularly on the hillside which rose from the valley of the Senne, each house standing by itself, with its thatched roof, from which in winter the rain or melted snow poured (there were, of course, no gutters then), and found its way down to the lower ground, which was thus little better than a swamp, even long after Brussels had become an important city. It was in the midst of this mixture of discomfort and luxury, so characteristic of the Middle Ages, that the people of Brussels, and of Brabant generally, passed their lives—gay, joyous, dissolute, but always with an eye to the main chance, and growing richer and richer. And in one thing Brabant differed greatly from Flanders. While in Flanders the towns were generally at deadly feud with each other—Bruges fighting with Ghent, and Ghent at enmity with Ypres, with each town divided into hostile factions, such as the Leliarts and Clauwerts, within its own walls, the people of Brabant seem to have lived at peace with each other, and, as a rule, to have made it their first business always to combine for the defence of their common interests. And in the middle of the fourteenth century came a time which called for mutual reliance.

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The last Duke of Brabant in the male line of the House of Louvain was Jean III. He died in 1355, leaving no heir male; and thus the succession fell to his daughter Jeanne,^[30] who had married Wencelas, brother of Charles IV. of Luxembourg.

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From time immemorial the rulers of Brabant, on succeeding to the throne, had taken an oath to maintain the liberty of their subjects; and many charters confirming ancient rights and privileges had been drawn up for the towns and communes. Before recognising the Duchess Jeanne and her husband, the towns of Brabant addressed to them a series of demands, which they requested the new rulers to accept. These took the form of a charter enumerating and confirming all the points which constituted public liberty in Brabant; and this charter received the name of the Joyeuse Entrée (or Blyde Incompste), because it was hailed with such applause by the representatives of the people. The inauguration of the Duchess Jeanne and Wencelas took place at Louvain on January 3, 1356, when they swore to maintain all the ancient privileges of the country. Thereafter the act of inauguration of each ruler of Brabant was known as his Joyeuse Entrée, and each Joyeuse Entrée was a development of acts declaring public rights which had previously existed, just as Magna Charta was founded on the older liberties of England. Each Duke had his Joyeuse Entrée, which he accepted sometimes with as little goodwill as King John felt at Runnymede. Thus, this famous constitution, the best known and the most liberal of all the free charters in the Netherlands, was not a parchment drawn up at one time, but a declaration of public rights which gradually developed.^[31]

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'The inauguration of a Duke of Brabant was a splendid and imposing ceremony. The Prince, who was lord of the noble Duchy, went to make himself known to his subjects, and to confirm the relations which secured both his and their happiness. He arrived, with his courtiers, at the ancient capital of Brabant, Louvain. As he descended the Brussels road he saw from afar the cradle of his ancestors, with its steeples, towers, and majestic walls, in the rich valley of the Dyle. Before entering, the heir of the old Counts of Louvain stopped for a little at the gates of the city, in the Monastery of Terbanck, where, in the midst of an immense crowd, the clergy, the officers of the University, and the magistrates, came to greet him. The brilliant assemblage then went into the chapel, where the Abbess of Terbanck, at the altar, took the crucifix and gave it to the highest dignitary of the Church who was present, and he, approaching the Duke, gave it him to kiss. The Rector of the University made an oration in the name of the University and the clergy. The Mayor placed in the Duke's hands the red staff of justice, emblem of his office. The Burgomaster gave him the keys of the city; and the Pensionary of Louvain welcomed him on behalf of all the local magistrates. Then the procession, to the sound of trumpets, went forth on horseback through the gates, the Duke and his Councillors, the States of Brabant, and the magistrates of Louvain, to the Church of St. Pierre, where they all dismounted and entered the choir; and there, after prayers had been said, the Prince swore to maintain the liberties and privileges of the Church in Brabant. Thence they went to the market-place, which was between the church and the Hôtel de Ville. The Duke took his stand on a platform with the representatives of the people of Brabant, and the Chancellor announced that he was about to swear his Joyeuse Entrée. The Act of Inauguration was

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read, first in Flemish and then in French, and the Duke repeated it word for word, and took an oath to the barons, nobles, towns, and franchises of the Duchy, that he would be their good and loyal seigneur, and that he would not treat them otherwise than justly, and in accordance with all their rights. They clothed the Duke in a robe of crimson trimmed with ermine, and put the ducal coronet of Brabant upon his head. The States swore fidelity to him. The trumpets sounded. The air was filled with acclamations; and the heralds' voices crying, "Long live the Duke of Brabant!" told the Duchy that another ruler had taken possession of his heritage in accordance with ancient custom.^[32]

The 'States' of Brabant grew out of the primitive method of government by an assembly of the people in the market-place, where each vassal voted in person. Later, chosen representatives alone voted; and at the end of the fourteenth century the clergy began to attend as a separate order in the assembly. The name of 'États' was not used in Brabant till 1421, when the nobles, clergy, and commons called themselves the States of Brabant.^[33] Side by side with the States grew up the Council of Brabant, which was originally a consulting body, a judicial council to assist the Duke in administering the law, but which gradually came to concern itself with the management of local affairs, while the States conducted the public business of the duchy.

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Soon after the inauguration of Jeanne and Wencelas, the jealous and ambitious Louis of Maele, Count of Flanders, who had married Jeanne's sister Marguerite, made war upon Brabant, and the struggle continued for years. Wencelas, whom Froissart describes as a wise and gallant man, was at last quite worn out by the troubles which beset him. He spent the winter and summer of 1382-1383 at Brussels with his wife, and tried to forget his sorrows in hunting, and in a round of balls and tournaments. But his health was ruined, and, having gone to breathe his native air in Luxembourg, he died there on December 3, 1383.

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The Duchess Jeanne, who survived her husband for thirteen years, years of constant trouble, died on December 1, 1406, at the age of eighty, after a reign of fifty years, and was buried in the old church of the Carmelites at Brussels. On her death the duchy of Brabant passed, by a family arrangement, to the House of Burgundy.^[34]

Under the House of Burgundy, during the fifteenth century Brussels became more than ever a city of pomp, gaiety, and pleasure. For nearly half a century of this period the history of Brabant is full of the names of Philip the Good and Charles the Bold. Philip lived generally at Brussels, and this brought to the town so many Frenchmen that French became the language of the Court and the fashionable tongue amongst the noblesse. The old castle or palace of the Dukes of Brabant on the Coudenberg was enlarged, and beautified by the addition of the Great Hall, where the Knights of the Golden Fleece, whose Order Philip founded, used to hold their Chapters, and which in later days was to witness the imposing spectacle of the abdication of Charles V. The boundaries of the park were extended, walls were built round it, and it was stocked with game. Bishops and nobles built themselves great mansions. The first stone of the magnificent Hôtel de Ville had been carved at the beginning of the century, and in 1444 Charles the Bold, then only ten years old, laid the foundations of the lofty spire, on the summit of which ten years later was placed that gilded statue of St. Michael which is there to this day. The Burgundian Library still remains, with its wealth of illuminated manuscripts and rare books; and the paintings of Roger van der Weyden and his cotemporaries show how art flourished at Brussels in the fifteenth century.

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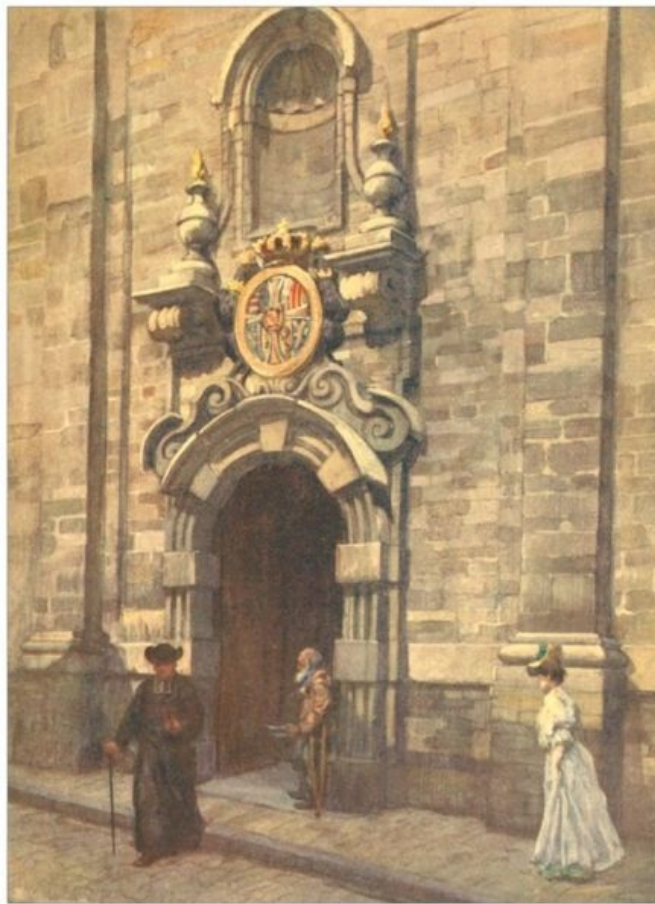
Unlike Philip, Charles the Bold detested the people of Brussels. His father, he said, had increased their riches and their pride beyond measure. He attacked the States of Brabant, and threatened to pull down the walls and gates of Brussels.

And when, after sweeping like a tempest over Europe, he died before the walls of Nancy in 1477, and the male line of the House of Burgundy came to an end, it was seen that the wide domain over which his family had reigned so proudly, and which he left to his daughter Marie, was torn by internal dissensions, and that the people of Brabant and Flanders were smarting under the inroads which had been made upon their ancient privileges.

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ENTRANCE to the old church of the Carmelites.



The Duchess Marie succeeded to a splendid inheritance, but her position was full of difficulty. Her treasury was empty. She had no army at her command. Popular discontent was growing. Her father had made the haughty burghers of Ghent bow before him, but as soon as he was dead they rose again. Ghent, Bruges, Brussels, all Brabant, were seething with disaffection. Payment of the taxes was refused and the officers of the Government were ill-treated. And, moreover, Hannibal was at the gates, in the person of Louis XI., who had rejoiced on hearing of the fate of Charles the Bold. The inauguration of Marie took place at the end of May, 1477, five months after her father's death; and her Joyeuse Entrée not only renewed the public rights which Philip and Charles had infringed, but placed fresh restrictions on the power of the future rulers of Brabant.

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The marriage of the young Duchess to some husband who could defend her rights was seen to be the only means of preserving the peace of the country. Her distrust of Louis XI. led her to refuse an alliance with a French Prince. She chose the Archduke Maximilian of Austria, and thus the fortunes of Brabant and Flanders were united with the fortunes of the House of Hapsburg, and the opportunity of peacefully absorbing Belgium was lost to France.

The marriage was celebrated in August, 1477. Five years later Marie died, leaving a son—the boy, then four years of age, who was afterwards known as Philip the Fair. He in turn married Joanna, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain; and the offspring of this marriage was the Great Emperor Charles V., during whose reign the capital of Brabant was more brilliant than ever.

No story is better known than the story of how in the evil days, when Philip II. ruled the 'Spanish Netherlands' in the interests of the Church, Bréderode and his friends, hearing of Berlaimont's scornful words, assumed the name of 'Beggars,' by which their party was afterwards known. But how typical it is! How full their doings are of the gay spirit of Brabant! It is springtime, fresh and bright, when the confederate nobles leave the mansion of Count Kuilemburg,^[35] a brilliant company of handsome, hot-blooded men of fashion and high birth, bearded all, and dressed in the elaborate finery of that time, and walk to the palace, where Margaret of Parma awaits them. They pass along the roadway which crowns the ridge, overlooking the multitude of pointed roofs below them to the left, with the spire of the Hôtel de Ville rising from where an opening among the housetops marks the situation of the Grande Place, where so many of them are afterwards to lay down their lives. The majestic towers of Ste. Gudule stand out above the houses which cluster round them on the plateau of St. Michael. In front of them is the palace, and beyond it the green glades and pleasure-grounds of the park. A crowd of people, who have climbed up from the lower town by the long steep way known as La Chaussée and the Montagne de la Cour, greet them with cheers at the entrance of the palace. The doors of that magnificent dwelling receive the glittering band, who go with gay insouciance to their momentous interview, and come out from it in the same spirit. They walk about the streets, and pass Berlaimont, who is talking to Arenberg. 'Look at our fine beggars!' says Berlaimont. 'How they ruffle it before us!' They sup at Kuilemburg's. Bréderode repeats Berlaimont's jest against them. They take it up. They toast 'The Beggars.' They dress themselves up as beggars, with leathern wallets and wooden bowls. They laugh, and spill their wine about, drain more bumpers to the Beggars' health, dance on the tables, and shout 'Vivent les Gueux!'^[36] Not even the grave face of Orange, who comes in, can stop the revel. And

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next day they lay aside their fine clothes, dress themselves, their families, and their servants as beggars, shave off their beards, and go about with wallets and bowls.

This was the spirit of the masquerade, of the carnival, the Kermesse; and thirty years later, when for a whole generation the country had suffered unexampled miseries, and most of the beggars of 1566 had perished by a violent death, the arrival of the Archduke Ernest as Governor of Brabant was made the occasion for a grotesque display—a stately procession of knights and burghers in historical and mythological costumes, followed by ships, dromedaries, elephants, whales, giants, dragons.' A strange people. The Dutch had fought with all the courage of the Nervii, and gained their freedom. The Belgians, descendants of the Nervii, had been slaughtered, defeated, tortured, and made slaves, had seen their country laid waste, and their cherished liberties taken from them wholesale; and yet, when all was lost and the heel of the oppressor was planted firmly on their necks, they were made happy by a circus procession.

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FOOTNOTES

- [30] Born at Brussels, June 24, 1322.
- [31] The text of the Joyeuse Entrée of Jeanne and Wencelas is given by Abbé Nameche, vol. iv., pp. 671-679, and the latest form which it took will be found in Pouillet's *Histoire de la Joyeuse Entrée de Brabant*, pp. 339-350.
- [32] Pouillet, p. 3.
- [33] 'Mais bientôt les intérêts communs formèrent des Associations particulières dans le sein même de l'assemblée. Les nobles étaient unis par le droit de la féodalité; au treizième et au quatorzième siècle, les villes Brabançonnnes conclurent entre elles des traités d'alliance, et de là l'origine des ordres. On sentit alors l'inconvénient du vote individuel, et l'on admit que les individualités particulières seraient liées par la majorité des suffrages dans le même ordre': (Pouillet, p. 45).
- [34] Wencelas and Jeanne had no children. Jeanne made a will leaving the Duchy of Brabant to her niece Marguerite (daughter of Louis of Maele and her sister), who had married Philip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy. Philip the Bold and Marguerite of Maele had two sons—Jean, who became Duke of Burgundy and Count of Flanders on the death of his father; and Antoine, who became Duke of Brabant on the death of his mother.
- [35] In what is now the Rue des Petits Carmes.
- [36] 'Then for the first time, from the lips of those reckless nobles, rose the famous cry, which was so often to ring over land and sea, amid blazing cities, on blood-stained decks, through the smoke and carnage of many a stricken field.'—MOTLEY: *Rise of the Dutch Republic*.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE BOMBARDMENT OF 1695—THE GRANDE PLACE—CHURCH OF STE. GUDULE—CHARLES OF LORRAINE

THE sixteenth century closes with the cession by Philip II. of the Spanish Netherlands to his daughter Isabella, as a dowry on her marriage to the Archduke Albert of Austria. The King died on September 13, 1598, and a year later the Infanta and her husband entered Brabant. When they rode through Brussels in the state procession, the Infanta's saddle was studded with diamonds and rubies to the value of 200,000 florins. The magistrates presented them with a magnificent service of silver plate. There were fêtes, fireworks, and illuminations, which lasted for three days. On a medal struck to commemorate this occasion, we see them seated in a triumphal chair, surrounded by sunbeams, and with olive branches in their hands. The condition of the country was deplorable, but the evils of the time seemed all forgotten in the midst of a round of festivities. The private virtues of Isabella and her husband made them popular, but, needless to say, Belgium was the battle-field of Europe during most of the seventeenth century.

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These almost incessant wars culminated, so far as Brussels was concerned, in the bombardment of August, 1695. For twenty years the city had been menaced with destruction. It is said that Antoinette Bourignon, a noted adventuress and soothsayer, who died in 1681, had foretold that the capital of Brabant would perish by fire, and this was remembered when, in the summer of 1695, Villeroy, failing to relieve Namur, which William III. was then besieging, marched on Brussels with an army 70,000 strong.

In the first week of August it became known that an immense store of bombs had been prepared at Mons, and that Villeroy was at Enghien. The French left that place on the 10th, and next day encamped at Anderlecht, close to Brussels. Preparations were made for defence. The Guilds furnished men; the avenues between the Porte de Namur and the Porte de Hal were fortified; and the low-lying grounds were inundated. But the French came nearer; and on the 13th Villeroy sent in a message saying that the Most Christian King had ordered him to bombard the town in retaliation for the way in which the English and Dutch fleets had treated the seaports of France;

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that, as vengeance was repugnant to the goodness of his master, he had been commanded to say that if the allies would in future refrain from such modes of warfare, he would do the same by them, and retire from before the city if, within six hours, he received a definite answer of such a nature that he could accept it.

On receiving this ultimatum, the magistrates asked for time to communicate with the Elector and the King of England. An hour and a half was granted, but as no answer had been sent when that time expired, some bombs were thrown, and one man was killed on the Montagne de la Cour. Presently a message arrived from the Elector asking for a delay of twenty-four hours, so that he might send for the opinion of King William. Villeroi's reply was to commence the bombardment at once, and forthwith bomb-shells and red-hot shot came pouring on the town.

The cannonade began at seven in the evening, and continued all night and during part of next morning. The whole city was in wild confusion, the people flying for refuge, as their dwellings took fire. There was a strong wind blowing from the west, and the flames spread from one house to another along the narrow streets, especially in the centre of the town, which was soon blazing like a vast furnace. It is said that nearly 4,000 houses were burned to the ground, and many damaged beyond repair. In the Grande Place, the Hôtel de Ville, the Brodhuis, and other old buildings were almost totally destroyed. The Church of St. Nicholas, the tower of which was the belfry of Brussels, sank in ruins. Many sick persons perished in burning hospitals. Convents and churches were shattered, and their ornaments, paintings, and archives disappeared. The old church of the Carmelites was entirely destroyed, and of the tomb of Jeanne, the last Duchess of Brabant, who was buried in the choir, not a trace remained. When the work of destruction was finished, and the French retired, it was seen that a great part of the city was lying in ruins.

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Before the bombardment, the Hôtel de Ville was nearly in its original condition; but now the west side was demolished by the bomb-shells, the roof had been consumed by the flames, and the whole building, with the exception of the spire and the west front, was almost entirely destroyed. So that the Hôtel de Ville of Brussels, as we see it now, is, except the spire and the façade towards the Grande Place, much changed from what it was previously to 1695.^[37] So are the guild-houses—l'Étoile, the first house next to the Hôtel de Ville, looking from the Grande Place, in the fourteenth century the headquarters of the Amman, or head of the trades, and once a tavern surrounded by a garden; Le Cygne, next to l'Étoile, which had been rebuilt in 1523 with a façade of wood; the Maison des Brasseurs, in the seventeenth century the guild-house of the brewers, and now a café, surmounted by a modern statue of Charles of Lorraine. These houses, and many more, suffered from the French shot, and had to be practically rebuilt.

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The most interesting building in the Grande Place, with the exception of the Hôtel de Ville, is that in the north-east corner, opposite the Hôtel de Ville. It is now called the 'Maison du Roi,' but is known to history as the 'Brodhuis,' because a list of the current prices for bread used to be put up there, when it was a *dépendance* of the Hôtel de Ville. It was so much damaged by the bombardment that it had to be entirely pulled down, but was rebuilt exactly on the original place in every detail. It was in the original Brodhuis that Egmont and Horn were imprisoned, and led forth to execution in the Grande Place on June 5, 1568. The large chamber on the third story, now the Communal Museum, is on the site of the room in which Egmont passed his last night, and is exactly the same, except that the present roof is higher. So well was the restoration of this beautiful building done, that no great effort of imagination is needed to picture the last scenes of that dismal tragedy.

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THE Cathedral of Ste. Gudule.



Nothing remains of the first Church of Ste. Gudule, which is said to have stood on the spot now occupied by the nave, and to have been erected there early in the eleventh century, on the site of a still older church. The present building dates from the thirteenth century. It suffered at the hands of the Reformers during the religious troubles of the sixteenth century, having been sacked and pillaged on June 6, 1579. The clergy had the foresight to carry away most of their treasures before the storm burst; but many tombs and monuments were ruthlessly destroyed.

The vault of the Dukes of Brabant was violated; but in 1585, after the return of the Spaniards, the remains which had been torn from their coffins and scattered about were collected and placed in a large wooden chest. In May, 1834, when the vault was opened for the burial of the Prince Royal, son of Leopold I., and brother of the present King of the Belgians, a number of bones were found lying on the ground—the bones of the Dukes and Princes of the lordly House of Brabant, the chest which contained them having mouldered away.

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During the French occupation, Ste. Gudule, which had passed uninjured through Villeroi's bombardment, was closed for two years, from 1798 to 1800, and there was a proposal to pull it down to make way for a theatre.

By that time, however, Brussels had several theatres; and of these the best known was the Théâtre de la Monnaie. Until the works of the great French dramatists were introduced, the only spectacles of the nature of stage-plays known in Brussels were long, dull pieces in the form generally of mystery plays. For instance, in the sixteenth century they acted, at the Convent of the Carmelites, the 'Tragedy of the Passion.' In this piece, which was in three acts, there was a chorus of children dressed as angels. News was brought to the wife of Malchus that St. Peter had cut off her husband's ear, on which the angels sang:

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À Malchus l'oreille
Le Seigneur lui dit,
Turelututu renguaine, renguaine,
Turelututu renguaine, renguaine ton coutiau,
Dans son fouriau.'

It was a great change from monkish doggerel like this to the French dramas, which, after being first played privately at the houses of some of the nobility, soon reached the general public, and created the demand for a theatre. In 1698 the old Mint House, which stood in the Place de la Monnaie, at that time a narrow thoroughfare blocked up by wooden buildings, was bought by an architect, Jean Paul Bombarda. He obtained leave to erect a 'Hôtel des Spectacles,' and was granted a monopoly of playing operas and comedies, and giving balls, for thirty years from January, 1705. But one manager after another failed, and it seemed as if the theatre must close its doors, when the actors themselves formed in 1766 a company on the model of the Comédie Française, which afterwards received a subsidy from the city. From that time the fortunes of the Théâtre de la Monnaie, now so well known, began to mend. The present building dates from 1817.

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It was during the peaceable reign of Maria Theresa—peaceable, at least, so far as the soil of

Belgium was concerned—that the theatre became so popular in Brussels. Brabant was then free from the troubles which had so often interfered with progress in more important things than the stage; and the people of the capital were kept in good-humour by the popularity of Duke Charles of Lorraine, who became Governor of the Austrian Netherlands in 1741.

In March, 1744, he came to live permanently in Brussels, accompanied by his wife, the Archduchess Marie, sister of Maria Theresa. They entered by the Allée Verte, then and for a long time after the fashionable promenade of Brussels. A battalion of the English Horse Guards was drawn up on the meadows at the side of the avenue. The Duke reviewed these troops; and then the cavalcade started along that green way from the Palace of Laeken, which so many joyful bands have trodden. The Horse Guards led the procession. Then came Charles of Lorraine in a carriage, followed by Ministers of State, and the lords and gentlemen of the Court, attended by some squadrons of English cavalry. At the Porte de Laeken, the burgomaster, kneeling reverently, presented the keys of the city in a silver basin. Thence they went through the streets to the Hôtel de Ville, and up the Rue de la Montagne to the Church of Ste. Gudule, where they were received by the Cardinal Archbishop of Malines and his clergy, who said mass. In the evening every street and square in Brussels blazed with illuminations.

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That day was the beginning of a long period of gaiety for the pleasure-loving city. No ruler could have suited the people of Brussels better than Charles of Lorraine. The annals of his time are full of merrymaking, the accounts of which enable us, perhaps better than graver histories do, to understand the Court of the Austrian Netherlands in the long reign of Maria Theresa.

In February, 1752, we find the Duke giving a 'Venetian Fête' in the palace of the Duc d'Arenberg, at which all the gay people in Brussels were present. There were four quadrilles, the first consisting of eight ladies and gentlemen dressed as gardeners, the second of pilgrims, the third and fourth of peasants and sailors. A masked supper followed the dancing, and at midnight all the company, still in their masks, drove in open carriages through the streets. The coachmen were masked, as were the grooms who rode beside each carriage with torches, and so were the musicians who played before and after them on their way to the Théâtre de la Monnaie, where they danced and feasted and gambled till morning.

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Charles of Lorraine lived generally at the château of Tervueren, where he spent large sums on stocking the woods and lakes with game and fish. 'What I must put in my park at Tervueren,' he notes in his private diary—'8 roe bucks, 150 hares, 100 pheasants, 4 wood cocks, 6 grey hens, 10 Guinea fowls, 50 partridges, 20 red partridges, 100 wild ducks. Of fish—600 tortoises, 300 crabs, 200 trout, 100 sturgeons.'

Every day he jotted down in his diary all his doings, all his petty cash payments, what the members of his Court did, and even the names of their mistresses. The Duc d'Arenberg gives jewels to La Nogentelle, a danseuse at the Monnaie. The Dutch Minister is ruining himself for La Cintray, another dancer; and the English Minister has lost his head over Mademoiselle Durancy. The Prince de Ligne and M. Androuins spent much time and money in company with the sisters Eugénie and Angélique d'Hannetaire. M. d'Hannetaire, the father of these young women, had begun life as a comedian in Brussels, and was now manager of the Monnaie. He had three daughters, who went in the *demi-monde* by the name of the Three Graces, and used their father's house as a place of assignation for gentlemen of quality. D'Hannetaire is said to have been luckier than most managers, and to have made a large fortune, much of it by the faro-table in the foyer of his theatre, where at that time heavy gambling went on every night.

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Duke Charles was a great gourmet, and gave famous dinners, and, of course, makes a note of the wines. Burgundy was evidently his own favourite tippie. He drank at least a bottle at every meal; but there was Rhine wine, Champagne, Bordeaux, and Tokay for his guests, not to speak of cognac, maraschino, and other liqueurs, all of the very best. He had red partridges sent from the Tyrol; and his cash-book records '114 livres paid to an express from Venice with a barrel of tunny-fish in oil, and for another express from Hamburg with a barrel of English oysters and black mussels.' In the official calendar of this jovial Prince the names of all who worked in his kitchen are given, from the head chef down to the turnspits. The name of the Chef Rôtisseur, curiously enough, was Rognon. The Comte de Sart held the important office of Grand Maître des Cuisines.

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He was the darling of Brussels, and so much loved that in the year 1766, when he was very ill, the churches were never empty all day long, so many pious people went to pray for his recovery. When his health was restored there were all sorts of festivities: the fountains spouted wine; half the town got drunk; the Prince de Ligne had an ox roasted whole on the street in front of his mansion and given to the poor; and the first time the Duke appeared at the theatre there was so much applause that the performance was stopped, and his doctor, who was seen in a box, was cheered again and again for having cured his patient.

Three years later, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his coming to Brabant, there were fêtes which continued for days. The Hôtel de Ville, the Brodhuis, and all the Grande Place glittered with coloured lights. The Comte de Sart illuminated his house with 1,000 red and yellow lanterns. There was a great banquet in the Hôtel de Ville, where 1,400 guests, the ladies seated and the gentlemen standing, were waited on by 200 grenadiers, and a free performance at the theatre, where two glasses of punch were given to each spectator. Medals were struck to commemorate the event. The town of Brussels presented the Duke with 25,000 florins, and the States of Brabant voted him a statue and 40,000 florins.

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There never was a Prince so popular or so respected in Brussels before or after him, and he had thirty-six long years of it. But the revels came to an end in July, 1780, when he died at his château at Tervueren, and was buried in the Church of Ste. Gudule, in the vault of Albert and Isabella.

Five months later the news reached Brussels that the Empress Maria Theresa had died at Vienna; and on the evening of December 23 a funeral service was held in Ste. Gudule. Mass being ended, the heralds, standing at the high altar, proclaimed the titles of the late Empress. Then one of them said in solemn tones: 'She is dead; may God have mercy on her soul.' And as the clergy intoned the *De Profundis*, sobs were heard in every corner of the dark, vast building, amidst which Toison d'Or, King-at-Arms, took up the sword of State, and, holding it high above his head, cried with a loud voice: 'Long live Joseph the Second, our Sovereign!'

FOOTNOTES

- [37] There is an engraving showing the ruins of the Grande Place in 1695 in Wauters' *Histoire de la Ville de Bruxelles*, vol. ii., p. 132.

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CHAPTER XV JOSEPH II. AND THE REVOLUTION OF BRABANT

IT was difficult to follow an Empress like Maria Theresa, or to find a successor to Charles of Lorraine in the government of the Austrian Netherlands. But if ever a Sovereign came to a throne full of good intentions it was Joseph II.; and yet, while the easy-going Charles had pleased the people of Brussels for thirty-six years, the reforming Joseph had in less than ten caused the Revolution of Brabant.

It was evident that many reforms were urgent. For a long time the spirit at least of the constitution of Brabant had suffered from the encroachment of the Imperial Government, and the country was losing its moral fibre. Nor had the peaceful and happy times of the Empress Maria Theresa rescued the people from the utter demoralization which long wars and their own submission to Spain had brought about. Every sphere of social life and every department of the Government required to be overhauled and invigorated. Moreover, the Austrian Netherlands were as Catholic as ever. The new light of the eighteenth century had not reached the clergy, who were still groping about in mediæval darkness; and some fresh system of educating the priesthood was clearly needed. Joseph II. might thus have found his task comparatively easy if he had gone about it in the right way, and taken counsel with the representatives of the people before introducing the reforms on which he was bent. Unfortunately he took a different line, asserted his personal authority, and tried to play the double rôle of an autocrat and a reformer, with disastrous results.

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The Church was speedily offended, for in November, 1782, the Emperor issued an edict granting civil liberty to the Protestants, and allowing them to build churches, to enjoy the privileges of citizenship, to take University degrees, and hold public offices. The Bishops protested against all this, but they were not listened to; and another edict allowed Protestants to open schools in any place where there were a hundred families of their religion, and to bury their dead according to their own rites. These measures of toleration were followed by a decree compelling the religious associations to register all their property in a new office, called the Caisse de Religion. The appeal to the Pope was abolished; and the settlement of disputes connected with marriages was taken from the Bishops, who saw their judgments submitted to the approval or disapproval of the civil powers. Convents were suppressed and turned into barracks or hospitals. The Emperor did his best to alter the Catholic liturgy. He drew up a philosophical catechism of his own invention. He ordered the use of new vestments. Marriage was to be regarded as a civil contract, and divorce was to be allowed.

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The most fervent adherents of the Church acknowledged that new schools for the training of young priests were needed; but the Emperor tried to set up a system of his own in defiance of the views of the clergy. The chief bone of contention on this point was the establishment of the Séminaire Générale for the education of youths who were intended for the priesthood. The University of Louvain, the old capital of Brabant, had been one of the most celebrated seats of learning in Europe; and there the new seminary was planted by an edict of October, 1786, which declared that the existing episcopal schools were to be abolished, and the clergy of the future to be educated at the seminary of Louvain. The purpose of the Emperor, it was announced in an official proclamation, was to bring back the clergy of the Netherlands to 'primitive Christianity,' and to substitute for the monkish system of education 'enthusiasm for their native land and attachment to the Austrian Monarchy,' to destroy the 'Ultramontane Hydra,' to teach them science and philosophy, art and letters, and reveal to them the lessons and the benefits of modern thought and progress; in a word, to make them useful citizens and give them a liberal education. But the Church would have none of these things, and in the Catholic Netherlands the influence of the Church was overwhelming.

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At Brussels, certainly, the people were not greatly moved by these attacks on the privileges of the clergy, nor disturbed at the prospect of having a cultured priesthood, and only began to grumble when an attempt was made to interfere with the Kermesses and national fêtes, in which they so much delighted; but the Emperor went on to irritate the States and Council of Brabant, which the citizens revered as the guardians of their liberty, and from that moment his enterprise was doomed to failure. The States declared that the Church reforms were illegal; but the Emperor

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ignored their opinion. The Council declared that its privileges were invaded by the establishment of a new Court of Appeal at Brussels. And both the States and the Council protested against other changes in the system of government on which the Emperor had set his heart. The Council continued to sit in defiance of his wishes; and the States met, and refused to vote supplies until their grievances were redressed. The Joyeuse Entrée had been infringed, they said; and soon, not only in Brabant, but in every part of Belgium, people were talking about their rights.^[38]

Brabant would not have been Brabant if some comedy had not been acted on the political stage at such a time. 'It was at this juncture,' we read, 'that there appeared upon the scene a woman who played a great rôle in the Revolution. The Dame de Bellem, called La Pinaud, after having been a lady of fashion at Brussels, began to mix herself up in political discussions with all the impetuosity of an ardent and passionate heart. Her intimate relations with the advocate Van der Noot much contributed, no doubt, to lead her into this path, where she was followed by her daughter Marianne, the Muse of this period with little poetry. Both of them helped the enemies of Austria with their pens and their influence over the numerous young men who attended their soirées; and the smiles of these two ladies, who are said to have been very pretty, doubtless gained more partisans to the Revolutionary cause than the pamphlets of the mother or the verses of the daughter.'^[39]

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Henri Nicolas Van der Noot, advocate and standing counsel for the trades before the Council of Brabant, and lover of the Dame de Bellem, was made President of a Revolutionary Committee at Brussels, and put his eloquence, which was that of a mob orator, at the service of the Bishops, who came forward as the defenders of the Constitution. In vain Joseph II. protested that he had no wish to infringe the Joyeuse Entrée. Van der Noot thundered, La Pinaud wrote, her daughter canvassed, the Bishops preached against him. A service was held in Ste. Gudule to invoke the aid of Heaven against the Séminaire Générale and all the new ways, and on behalf of the Joyeuse Entrée. On leaving the church, some young people put on tricolor cockades, and this badge was soon common in the streets. Things went from bad to worse, and on May 18, 1789, Brussels was on the brink of revolution.

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An immense crowd filled the Grande Place, where the States were sitting in the Hôtel de Ville to consider an ultimatum which had come from Vienna, demanding supplies and the suppression of the Council of Brabant. The States refused the supplies, and directed the Council to sit *en permanence*. The Emperor's Minister, Count Trauttmansdorff, by turns implored and threatened. 'Your resistance,' he told them, 'will ruin you.' 'The Emperor,' they replied, 'may destroy us, but he cannot coerce our consciences or our honour.' Troops were then marched into the Grande Place. A squadron of dragoons were drawn up between the Brodhuis and the Hôtel de Ville, and the States were informed that the Joyeuse Entrée of Brabant was suppressed. On this the Marquis de Prud'homme d'Ailly rose, and said to the Minister: 'Since there is nothing more for us to do here, I am, sir, your very humble servant,' and left the Hôtel de Ville, followed by all the members of the States.

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The news from Paris, where the clouds were gathering dark round the head of his sister Marie Antoinette, might have made Joseph II. pause; but, far away in Vienna, he made up his mind to go on as he had begun. So the Revolution of Brabant gained force, and Van der Noot was the popular idol, with all Brussels at his feet. On his return from a tour of agitation in the provinces he was received with royal honours: the Hôtel de Ville flung out its red hangings; and at the doors of Ste. Gudule he was met by the canons, who waved incense before him, and placed him on the Emperor's *prie-dieu*. He went to the Monnaie, where 'La Mort de César' was performed, and the actor who played Brutus declaimed—

'Sur les débris du trône et de la tyranie,
Du Belge indépendant s'élève le génie,'

on which all the spectators rose, waving their hats and shouting 'Vive la liberté! Vive Van der Noot!' and the players crowned the demagogue with laurels, and hailed him as 'the Lafayette of Belgium.'

BRUSSELS

OLD houses in the Grande Place.



The Revolution seemed complete when the provincial States throughout the Austrian Netherlands proclaimed their independence, and summoned a Congress of the United States of Belgium. But they needed men of sterner stuff than any who could be found in the Flanders and Brabant of that time; and the end was not long in coming. The extreme clericals, led by Van der Noot, were opposed by the followers of the advocate Vonck. Van der Noot had always relied on the hope of foreign intervention. Vonck wished the Belgians to work out their own salvation. Van der Noot and the Church party were obstinately conservative. Vonck and his party wished to see the expulsion of the Hapsburgs followed by measures of reform. The Vonckists had the worst of the quarrel, for the masses were against them, and showed their sentiments in a way which those who know Brussels will understand.^[40] But the leaders of the other party lacked the ability to make head against the Austrian troops which marched into Brabant. The volunteer army of the Catholic Netherlands, deserted by its Prussian commander, General Schönfeldt, was disbanded; and so the Brabant Revolution came to naught.

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Joseph II. died before the end, and in the midst of all his troubles. He had yielded much. The seminary at Louvain was closed, and the Joyeuse Entrée was restored. But these concessions came too late, and, on February 20, 1790, this Sovereign of good intentions passed away, while whispering in the ear of the Prince de Ligne, 'Your country has been my death.'

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His brother Leopold reigned in his stead. The Austrians entered Brussels on December 2, 1790; and a week later the Ministers of Austria, Great Britain, Russia, and Holland signed the Convention of the Hague, which confirmed to the people of the Catholic Netherlands all the rights and privileges which they had enjoyed under the Empress Maria Theresa. But now the curtain was about to rise on a new scene in the history of Brabant and Flanders.

FOOTNOTES

- [38] 'On se mit à exhumer et à méditer les textes de nos anciens privilèges. Nobles, clergé, savants, femmes, gens du peuple, tout le monde parla *joyeuse-entrée*' (De Gerlache, i. 331).
- [39] Wauters, ii. 321.
- [40] 'On donnait au Manneken'—the curious little statue in the Rue du Chêne—'un uniforme de volontaire, et chaque quartier de la Ville avait son arbre de la liberté chargé d'allégories patriotiques ou anti-Vonckistes' (Wauters, ii. 393).

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THE JACOBINS OF BRUSSELS—VISIT OF NAPOLEON—THE HUNDRED DAYS

C'EST la Belgique,' said Danton, 'qui comblera le déficit de la Révolution.' The Convention at Paris saw in the riches of the Austrian Netherlands a means of filling its treasury, and supporting the failing credit of France; and its emissaries knew how to work upon the people of Brabant and Flanders. 'Nous avons évangélisé partout,' was the report sent to Paris by one of them, 'in the streets, in the clubs, in the drinking-shops, in the theatres.... We have covered the walls with placards, and made the highways resound with our hymns of liberty. We have dallied with their fanaticism, and tried to stir up the lower ranks of the clergy against the higher, and so kill priestcraft by priestcraft.'

Meantime the army of the Republic had been at work, and on the field of Fleurus Jourdan completed the conquest which Dumouriez had begun at Jemappes. [Pg 220]

Dumouriez, who understood the character of the people he was dealing with, was all for conciliation. He did not wish to bring the Jacobins of Paris to Brussels, and raise up men like Chabot and Marat. He proclaimed that the French came as friends and brothers, and promised to secure the independence of the country. Above all things, he wanted to conciliate the Church. But most of the Revolutionists sneered at the Catholicism of the Austrian Netherlands. 'What a pity,' said Camille Desmoulins, 'that the priests spoil the Belgians so much. One cannot but wonder at the way in which these people, while wishing to preserve their liberty, try also to preserve the cowls of their monks;' and Marat, who had no patience with the moderation of Dumouriez, declared that nothing would come of the war 'till a true *sans-culotte* commands our army.' So after Fleurus the Austrian Netherlands were made part of France.

The moderate democrats of Brabant had been swamped in the early days of the French Revolution by the extreme men who corresponded with the Jacobins at Paris; and some strange scenes had taken place in the venerable Grande Place of Brussels. A Tree of Liberty was set up there, round which men, women, and children danced the carmagnole; and a mob went up to the Place Royale chanting the '*Ça ira*' and roaring out the 'Marseillaise,' fastened ropes to the statue of Charles of Lorraine and pulled it down. And it must have been a curious sight when Dumouriez gave receptions of an evening, and artisans rubbed shoulders with men like the Duc d'Ursel and the Duc d'Arenberg, who at first, like others of the noblesse, mingled with the red-caps and joined the Jacobin clubs, which seem to have been quite the fashion. [Pg 221]

Ridiculous things were done at the meetings of the Jacobin clubs. The advocate Charles burns his diploma, and says he wants no title but *sans-culotte*, and then goes on to propose that the names of all the squares and streets of Brussels be changed. There should, he told his friends, be Places d'Athènes, de Rome, de France, and Rues de Jean-Jacques Rousseau, de Brutus, de Voltaire, de l'Opinion, de la Philosophie, du Divorce.

One wiseacre demands that the ancient constitution of Brabant be burned on the following Sunday during the ceremony of 'The Benediction of the Flag of the *sans-culottes*.' 'Let the bust of Van der Noot be also burned,' he added; on which another statesman rises, and exclaims: 'Je demande, moi, qu'on promène le Manneken de Van der Noot avec celui de la Pinaud, sa bonne amie.' Clearly the *sans-culotte* of Brussels was a mere tinsel imitation of the genuine article at Paris. At Paris all was tragedy; Brussels amused itself with a burlesque. But as time went on, and it dawned upon these would-be Jacobins and *sans-culottes* that the Revolution meant fighting in the armies of France, and that everything in Church and State was to be turned upside-down, they began to lose their tempers, and long before October, 1795, when the formal incorporation with France took place, they were quite tired of masquerading as Jacobins. [Pg 222]

Five years later they were as weary of the Directory as they had been of the Convention; but when, in 1803, Napoleon came to Brussels, he was well received. There was, however, a good deal of sham enthusiasm on that occasion, and his most successful visit was in 1811, when he brought the Empress Marie Louise with him. Brussels then showed that, in spite of the Brabant Revolution, the House of Austria had a strong hold on the affections of the citizens. 'Voilà Marie Louise d'Autriche!' was heard in the streets. The town gave fêtes in her honour; and one evening, when the Empress was at the Monnaie, and had brought with her a bouquet of tulips from Harlem, which fell over the edge of her box, gentlemen ran from all parts of the theatre and picked up the fragments, which they made into button-holes. 'L'Impératrice parut charmée de cette galanterie Bruxelloise,' says the local account of this incident. [Pg 223]

Napoleon was at Laeken with Marie Louise when the campaign in Russia was resolved on. The story goes that on receiving the news that the Tsar refused to carry out the Continental System, he began at once to whistle the air of 'Marlborough s'en va-t-en guerre,' and ran out into the grounds of the palace in such a rage that he nearly knocked the Empress down. It was at Laeken that the fatal declaration of war was signed.

As soon as the Allies entered the Netherlands after the French reverses of 1812 and 1813, they were made welcome. Between four and five o'clock on the evening of February 1, 1814, the French rearguard left Brussels; and about an hour later the first Cossacks, a party of half a dozen, rode in by the Porte de Louvain, passed quickly through the city, and went on after the French army. These scouts were followed by a large force of cavalry and infantry. The Prussian infantry found billets, and the Cossacks lay down and slept beside their horses on the snow in the Rue des Fripiers,^[41] the townsfolk standing near, and wondering at their strange dress and language. Soon the town was full of soldiers, some of whom remained there, while others pressed on to France. [Pg 224]

The news that Paris had capitulated reached Brussels on March 3. The bells were rung, cannon were fired, and the houses were illuminated. Then, one after another, the towns which still held out surrendered. Carnot alone, who was in command of Antwerp, gave no sign of yielding; but in the middle of April, while the last arrangements were being made for the departure of Napoleon to Elba, he pulled down the tricolor, and the great stronghold on the Scheldt fell, with the rest of Belgium, into the hands of the Allies.

It was almost a fixed rule of international politics in Europe, when some great war was finished and some treaty of peace was on the boards, that people should ask each other what was to be done next with the Catholic Netherlands. The rich inheritance of the House of Burgundy was passed from hand to hand by Austrians, Spaniards, and Frenchmen, without any statesman ever considering what might be the wishes of the inhabitants; and now, in 1814, the Great Powers, at first in secret, resolved to set up a new State, consisting of Holland and Belgium united, and call it the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with William of Orange-Nassau on the throne. He came to Brussels in July, 1814, not yet as King, for the Congress of Vienna was to settle the map of Europe and parcel out the spoils, but as Governor on behalf of the Allies; and at the end of the year his son, the Prince Royal, took command of the allied army in Belgium.

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They had a gay time in Brussels during that winter of 1814-15, as everyone knows. But on March 1 the Great Man landed in France; and a fortnight later the Orange flag was hoisted in Brussels, and the new King announced that he had not intended to assume the royal authority till the work of the Congress at Vienna was finished, and all their decisions could be executed together, but that the recent event in France had made him resolve to wait no longer.

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On April 5 the Duke of Wellington came post-haste from Vienna, and went to live in a house next door to the Hôtel de France, at the corner of the Rue de la Montagne du Pare and the Rue Royale.

And now during these wonderful Hundred Days, about which so much has been written, the eyes of all Europe were fixed on Paris and Brussels. But there were some good folk living at Ghent, who considered themselves as the most important people in the world, as well they might, considering what pains were being taken, and what oceans of blood were to be shed, in order to make it safe for them to depart from East Flanders and go back again to France, whence they had lately fled in a great hurry.

Louis XVIII. was lying on a sofa at the Tuileries, suffering excruciating agonies from the gout, when a despatch was brought to him with the news that Napoleon had been in France for the last five days, and was at that moment on the road to Paris. Instantly preparations were made for flight, with as much secrecy as they had been made for that terrible trip in the *Berline* on which another Bourbon had set out so many years before. Everything was kept quiet, and no one whom it was possible to hoodwink was trusted. On the night fixed for the departure one of the Ministers was at the palace. The King gave him no hint; but as he was leaving the captain of the guard whispered: 'We're off in an hour; the relays are ordered; meet us at Lille.' They started, and had a most uncomfortable journey. It was pouring rain. The roads were deep in mud. The royal portmanteau was stolen with all the royal wardrobe. The royal gout was most painful; and at Lille the garrison was sullen. There were tricolor badges on all sides. Eagles were pulled out of knapsacks, and the fleur-de-lis was nowhere to be seen. This was evidently no place to stay at long; and so the King crossed the frontier and made for Ghent, where he had been offered a home in the splendid mansion of the Comte d'Hane-Steenhuysen.^[42] He remained there comfortably until after the Battle of Waterloo.

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People who came to Brussels in the first week of June were surprised to find how peaceful the town was, and how gay. Everyone has read the narratives of what went on, and the story has been told over and over again, and nowhere better than in *Vanity Fair*, which is history in disguise in the chapters where Amelia invades the Low Countries. On June 14 Napoleon, having crossed the frontier, was at Charleroi, on the road to Brussels, and all Brussels was talking about the dance which the Duke and Duchess of Richmond were giving next day at their house in the Rue de la Blanchisserie, in the ballroom with the paper of 'a trellis pattern with roses.'^[43]

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It was a strange night in Brussels, that night of June 15, 1815. By eight o'clock the Duke has given orders for the troops to march at daybreak, for he knows that Napoleon has crossed the frontier. Then he goes to the ball to wait for another despatch. At eleven o'clock, when the dancing is in full swing, the message reaches him. He hastens the march by two hours, and the bugles begin to sound all over the town. 'One could hear,' says General Brialmont, 'in the ballroom the rolling of cannon and the steady tramp of the regiments marching towards the forest of Soignies.' The Duke is in bed and asleep by two o'clock; but many of his officers dance on till it is time to rush off to their regiments

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It would be useless to repeat the story of the next three days. It has been told a hundred times. The clear, refreshing dawn; the soldiers gathering from their billets; the partings; the regiments marching off, the Black Watch and the 92nd Highlanders with the bagpipes playing before them, through the park and the Place Royale, and passing away up the Rue de Namur and along the road beyond, to where the soft light of early morning is beginning to shine among the glades of Soignies; the sound of heavy firing on the 16th; the silence on the 17th, with the news that Blucher has lost the day at Ligny, and that Wellington is falling back from Quatre Bras; the carts and material of the army moving slowly up the Rue de Namur all day long; the awful suspense of the 18th, when no one can rest.

'We walked about nearly all the morning,' says Lady de Ros, 'being unable to sit still, hearing the firing, and not knowing what was happening.' About three o'clock the observant Mr. Creevy went for a stroll beyond the ramparts. 'I walked about two miles out of the town,' he writes, 'towards the

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army, and a most curious, busy scene it was, with every kind of thing upon the road, the Sunday population of Brussels being all out in the suburbs of the Porte Namur, sitting about tables drinking beer and making merry, as if races or other sports were going on, instead of the great pitched battle which was then fighting.' It was an hour or so after this that the Cumberland Hussars came galloping through the Porte de Namur, down the street and across the Place Royale, shouting that the French were coming, and raised such a panic. It was not till late at night that the truth was known.

And at Ghent? They had got on there very well on the whole. The gout was troublesome, but Louis XVIII. had the enormous appetite of the Bourbons, and ate a great deal. The Comte d'Hane gave a big dinner one day, at which the King managed to consume a hundred oysters for dessert. Some of the courtiers used to go to a tavern in the suburbs and eat a small white fish, a dainty much esteemed at Ghent, which was caught in the river there. Chateaubriand, who was one of this Court in exile, was at a dinner where they sat at table from one o'clock till eight. 'They began,' he says, 'with sweets and finished with cutlets. The French alone know how to dine with method. They played whist, and went to the theatre. Catalani sang for them at concerts, and also in private to please the King. When the royal gout allowed it, the King went to Mass at the Church of St. Bavon. But during the last three days His Majesty was very nervous, and kept his carriage secretly ready for another flight.

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RUE de Namur.



On the 18th, Chateaubriand was taking a walk outside the town near the Brussels gate, when a courier from Alost rode up with a despatch from the Duc de Berri. 'Bonaparte,' it said, 'entered Brussels yesterday, 17 June, after a bloody battle. The battle was to begin again to-day. The Allies are said to have been completely defeated, and the order for retreat given.' All Ghent was in dismay. The Comte d'Artois arrived and confirmed the bad news. Many Belgians who had been in the French army immediately started to take service once more under Napoleon. Preparations were made for starting at once; but at one o'clock next morning a despatch came with the news of the victory. On June 22 the King left Ghent, to mount once more the throne which had been retained for him at such a cost.

The scene of the great battle is wonderfully little changed since then. The level of the ground at the centre of the ridge occupied by the Allies has been lowered by the removal of earth to make the Mound of the Belgian Lion; the tree under which the Duke of Wellington and his staff stood at intervals during the day is gone long since; a tramway runs past the farm of La Haye Sainte towards Quatre Bras and Charleroi; and a number of houses have been built on the road between Waterloo and Mont St. Jean. But the general aspect of the fields on which the fight took place remains the same. Down to the right, looking from Mont St. Jean, the château of Hougoumont, half destroyed by shot and fire, still remains as it was left after the battle, with its orchard walls and tall, dark trees. The farmhouse of La Haye Sainte, that scene of carnage, is still where it was, at

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the side of the road which leads down the incline, and then up from the narrow valley to La Belle Alliance, near which is now the monument of the Wounded Eagle, a memorial to the last combatants of the army which fought and lost with such matchless valour. Every yard of the ground is sacred. There is, in all the world, no spot where a Briton and a Frenchman can meet with more profound emotions of mutual respect than on the slopes near Mont St. Jean.

WATERLOO

THE farm of La Belle Alliance and the mound surmounted by the Belgian lion.



FOOTNOTES

- [41] The street which leads from the Place de la Monnaie towards the Bourse.
- [42] This fine house is now No. 63, Rue des Champs, the residence of the Comte de Bouisies, who married the daughter of Madame Borluut, a direct descendant of the Comte d'Hane of 1815.
- [43] *Reminiscences of Lady de Ros* (Lady Georgina Lennox).

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CHAPTER XVII

THE DUTCH GOVERNMENT—THE REVOLUTION OF 1830

ONE day, soon after the Battle of Waterloo, the Tsar Alexander was at La Belle Alliance with William, King of the Netherlands, and his son the Prince of Orange. He asked for a glass of wine, and drank to '*la belle alliance*, not only of nations, but of families.'

The marriage of the Grand Duchess Anna Paulowna to the Prince of Orange had just been settled; and all the Courts of Europe believed that the troublesome question of the Low Countries was at last finally solved by the union of Holland and Belgium under the dynasty of Nassau, now to be allied by marriage with one of the Great Powers which had placed it on the throne of the new Kingdom.

The English Government had arranged that the Prince of Orange, heir to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, should marry the Princess Charlotte, heiress to the throne of England; and their engagement had been announced to the States-General at The Hague in March, 1814. But this plan had fallen through from the causes with which everyone is familiar—the objections of the Princess Charlotte, who did not wish to leave England, and liked the Prince less the more she saw of him; her fancy for the impecunious Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, whom she afterwards married; and the intrigues of the Grand Duchess of Oldenburgh to break off the match, in order to bring about a marriage between her sister, the Grand Duchess Anna Paulowna and the Prince of Orange.

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The Prince was accordingly married to the Grand Duchess. His character—careless, pleasure-loving, and extravagant—made him very popular in Brussels, and he spent as much as possible of his time in his palace there, or at the château of Tervueren. He preferred the Belgians to his countrymen the Dutch, whose grave ways did not suit him. Soon after his marriage he sent a secret message to the Duke of Wellington, under whom he had served in the Peninsular War and during the Hundred Days, asking for the Duke's influence to obtain leave to fix his Court at Brussels. Wellington refused to interfere in a domestic question, and, in reply to the Prince's suggestion that his presence in Brussels might help to check discontent amongst the Belgians, said

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that he doubted the statements as to Belgian disaffection, *as many persons, and even nations, were interested in breaking the union of Holland and Belgium.*

The King and Queen of the Netherlands had the greatest difficulty in persuading the Prince to visit them in Holland. The Communal Council of Brussels waited on them at The Hague with an address of congratulation on their accession. 'I don't know,' said the Queen, 'what you do to keep my son at Brussels; but he is so fond of you that we hardly ever see him here.' It would have been better for the stability of his throne if the King had spent more of his own time in Brussels, for signs of that discontent about which the Prince had written to Wellington soon began to appear, and he might, perhaps, have taken warning before it was too late, if he had known the truth.

Like Joseph II., William came to the throne full of good intentions; like him, he alienated the clergy at the outset; and, like him, he tried to give the Catholic Netherlands a liberal Constitution on his own terms. His aim was to make them free and happy, but 'Alone I did it' must be written over all. His character was a combination of sage ideas and Dutch obstinacy; and one great root of bitterness between him and the clergy was that never-ending question of education, over which parties are fighting in Belgium at the present day. It was not that he wished to make the southern provinces Protestant. But he was bent on raising the intellectual standard of the country; and for this purpose he founded, amongst other institutions, the Collège Philosophique at Louvain, where the young priests were to receive a thorough education in accordance with the spirit of the time—a scheme which the Church resisted as it had resisted the Séminaire Générale of Joseph II., and with equal success.

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In a variety of ways the King alienated the people as well as the priests. Though the States-General met alternately at The Hague and at Brussels, all the great departments of the executive were in Holland. They would, indeed, have been safest there in the event of a war; but it was made a grievance that some of them were not at Brussels, Antwerp, or Ghent. Most of the officials were Dutch, which was said to prove a wish for Hollander supremacy, though the Dutch were a minority of the population of the United Kingdom. The press attacked the Government, and was severely punished under a system of decrees emanating from the personal authority of the King. The use of Dutch as the official language was enforced against the wishes of the majority. Dutch methods of taxation were extended to Belgium, and trouble was caused by the fact that Holland was for Free Trade and Belgium for Protection. And of course the southern provinces were Catholic and the northern Protestant, which more than anything else kept them on bad terms. At last the impression became universal that the King's policy was to sacrifice the interests of the Belgian provinces to those of Holland; and the result was that the two great parties, or schools of thought, which had always bitterly opposed each other, the Catholics and the Liberals, united to oppose the Government.^[44] This was in 1829. Next year the Paris revolt of July, which drove out Charles X., and put Louis Philippe on the throne of France, taught the Belgians how easy it might be to get rid of a ruler with whom they were discontented; and when the news from Paris came to Brussels, the streets and cafés were full of men reading the papers, and saying to each other, 'That's the way to revolt! Long live the barricades! Long live the people!'

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The days passed on in Brussels, with the restlessness of the population increasing. The King's birthday was August 24, and preparations had been made for celebrating it with unusual brilliancy. The park was to be illuminated, and there were to be fireworks at the Porte de Namur. But the people of Brussels, in that summer of 1830, were not to be pacified by fêtes. Placards were found posted on the walls with the ominous words: 'Le 23, Feu d'artifice; le 24, Illuminations; le 25, Révolution.' Warnings, too, reached the Procureur du Roi that mischief was brewing; and the festivities were abandoned, the reason being given that bad weather was expected!

On the evening of the 25th Auber's 'Muette de Portici' was to be played at the Monnaie. This opera had been more than once forbidden lest it should cause disturbances; but now permission had been granted to perform it, and the theatre was full. Every song of revolt was cheered, and the climax came with the words of the duet in Act 4:

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'Amour sacré de la Patrié,
Rends-nous l'audace et la fierté?'

The audience rose and rushed out into the Place de la Monnaie, inflamed by the songs they had just heard, and shouting, 'Liberty! liberty!' Then the mob gathered and rioting began. The old flag of Brabant was hoisted on the Hôtel de Ville, and the town was in an uproar for the next two days.

Orders were sent from The Hague to put down the 'rising' by force, and Dutch troops under the command of Prince Frederick, the King's second son, marched on Brussels. For nearly a month threats, promises, negotiations were tried. But the insurgents refused to yield. Paid agitators went about among the people; men of high standing took the lead in organizing the revolt; barricades were erected; volunteers came in from all parts; the Bishops pulled the strings behind the scenes, and the country clergymen instigated their parishioners to rebellion; the whole of Flanders and Brabant was soon up in arms, and on September 23 the Dutch advanced to attack Brussels.

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Three days of desperate fighting in the streets followed. The Dutch held the park in force, but could not penetrate into the Place Royale, which was defended by a strong barricade. Every house in the Rue Royale was full of insurgents, who fired from the windows on the Dutch. In other parts of the city there was the same stubborn resistance. For three days the struggle continued. At sunset the firing ceased, and the working men in their blouses sat drinking and boasting of their exploits in the cafés, while their leaders met at the Hôtel de Ville and took counsel for the morrow, and the Dutch bivouacked in the park and on the boulevards. Each morning at dawn the tocsin sounded from Ste. Gudule, and the people rushed to the barricades.

At daybreak on September 27 all was quiet when a small party of the insurgents stole into the park, and went forward under cover of the trees. They found it empty. The night had been very dark, and in the small hours the Dutch had left in silence, and were now marching away from Brussels.

It was a day of brilliant sunshine, and while the bourdon was sounding from the towers of Ste. Gudule, and horsemen were riding out into the country with the news, the populace flocked to the Palace. The men of the blouse, their hands and faces black with gunpowder, merchants, priests, lawyers, well-dressed ladies and ragged harridans, boys and girls, young and old, went in, pushing, laughing, singing. They did little damage, but hacked and cut the portraits of the King—the poor King who had meant so well by his kingdom. The Queen's private rooms were examined, and her wardrobes opened. One lad found a rich dress, 'a magnificent robe of ceremony—white velvet embroidered with gold.' He pulled it out, put it on, and over it a mantle of orange colour. With a hat 'à la Marie Stuart' on his head, he sallied out. The mob, crying, 'The Queen is prisoner!' surrounded him with shouts of laughter, and then tore off the finery and trailed it in the dust. A marble bust of the King was brought out. They put a crown of Dutch cheese upon it, and carried it about with cries of 'Down with the first and last King of the Netherlands!' Many lives had been lost during the fighting; but this was Brussels. It was all very different from Paris and the downfall of Louis and Marie Antoinette.

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The chief work of the Congress of Vienna was undone; and King William instructed Baron Falck, his Ambassador at the Court of St. James's, to ask for intervention on his behalf. The British Government replied that troops could not be sent; that the Five Great Powers were to meet in London; and that the policy of Great Britain would be to prevent the troubles in the Netherlands leading to a breach of the peace in Europe.

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How the plenipotentiaries of Great Britain, France, Russia, Austria, and Prussia met in conclave on the weary question of the Low Countries; how this Conference of London recognized the independence of the Catholic Netherlands, defined their boundaries, and made them neutral; how at the same time a National Congress at Brussels declared that the House of Nassau had forfeited the throne, chose as the first King of independent Belgium Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, and framed, under the influence of Lamennais and his disciples, a Constitution whose democratic principles breathe the spirit of the Joyeuse Entrée of Brabant, are events which form a part of the general history of modern Europe.

FOOTNOTES

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The question of tariffs was one bond of union. At a political dinner on July 9, 1829, when the toast of the union of Catholics and Liberals was given, one of several maxims on the walls was: 'Notre industrie, agricole et manufacturière, a besoin d'un système de protection sagement pondéré; sans cette protection, le travail étranger viendrait prendre bientôt sur notre marché la place du travail national' (C. Rodenbach: *Épisodes de la Révolution dans les Flandres*, p. 82).

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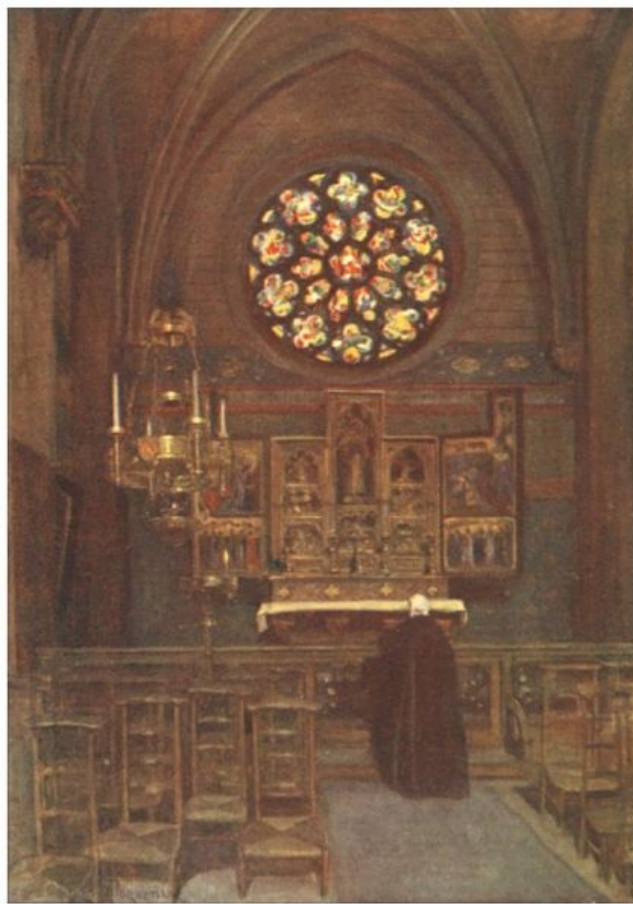
CHAPTER XVIII THE VICISSITUDES OF ANTWERP

WHEN Napoleon was at Antwerp in 1803, he spoke to the Communal Council about the miserable condition of the place. 'It is little better,' he said, 'than a heap of ruins. It is scarcely like a European city. I could almost have believed myself this morning in some African township. Everything needs to be made—harbours, quays, docks; and everything shall be made, for Antwerp must avail itself of the immense advantages of its central position between the North and the South, and of its magnificent and deep river.'

Antwerp was indeed a pitiable sight. Its trade had sunk to nothing. Rows of squalid houses, with wooden gables 300 years old, looked down upon canals choked up with slime and filth. The wharves on the banks of the noble River Scheldt were mere heaps of rotten timber. Half the churches, from which the stained glass and rich ornaments of former days had long since departed, were closed. Grass was growing in the deserted streets; and the walls of this desolate city contained a population which numbered only some 40,000 souls. Such in the beginning of the nineteenth century was the state of Antwerp, which had once been the centre of European commerce and the greatest seaport in the world.

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ANTWERP THE Cathedral—Chapel of St. Joseph.



The position of Antwerp, close to the estuary of the mighty stream which brought it within reach of the markets, not only of Flanders, but of every part of the world which could be reached by water, had made it from an early period one of the chief cities of Brabant. But for a long time Bruges and Ghent, after their formidable rival Ypres had sunk into insignificance, absorbed most of the commerce of the Netherlands. These splendid cities fell; the commerce which had made them great found its way to Antwerp; and by the middle of the sixteenth century, when the waters of Zwijn, which had carried so many costly bales to Bruges, were drying up, the broad expanse of the Scheldt was covered by innumerable ships threading their way up to where the merchant princes of Italy, Germany, and England had established themselves, in a city which was now greater than even Venice or Genoa. Every week 2,000 waggons heavily laden entered Antwerp. Silk, satin, velvet, and tapestry; gold, silver, and precious stones; spices and sugar from Portugal and Spain, now enriched by their conquest of the Indies; wines from France and Germany—all found their way to Antwerp. The manufactures of the Flemish towns were sent down the highway of the Scheldt to the most distant parts of the world; but England, Spain, and Portugal were the countries to which most of the cargoes were exported, and these were so rich that on one occasion the contents of thirteen ships taken by pirates were valued at 500,000 *écus d'or*.^[45]

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Already, under the Dukes of Brabant and Burgundy, the city had grown far beyond its original limits; but the wealth, the magnificence, and the vastly increased population which the remarkable prosperity of the sixteenth century brought with it, led Charles V. to issue a decree that the walls must be extended, and the boundaries now became those which enclosed it until recent times.

The Cathedral Church of Notre Dame, still the glory of Antwerp, was the largest and the richest ecclesiastical building in the Netherlands. Not far from the Cathedral was the Vleechhuis, now known as the Vieille Boucherie, a solid building of red brick relieved by courses of white stone, with five hexagonal turrets, erected by the Guild of Butchers, the interior of which was in those days ornamented with elaborate carvings, paintings, and marble statues. It is now surrounded by mean houses in the most squalid part of the town; but its massive appearance, even in decay, gives an idea of the power and wealth of what was not the most powerful nor the wealthiest of the guilds.

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In the Grande Place, as in the Grande Place of Brussels, were other guild houses, distinguished by their quaint gables and towering façades, each the home of some great corporation. There, too, was the Hôtel de Ville, built of marble, and called 'the wonder of the world,' lately erected to take the place of an earlier structure which was no longer considered worthy of the Antwerp which, having dethroned her rival Bruges, was now called by her proud inhabitants the 'Queen of the North.' In all parts of this opulent city bankers and merchants—Fuggers, Greshams, Stettens, Spinolas, and many more—had built for themselves luxurious houses, and met daily at the Bourse, where more business was done than anywhere else in Europe.

ANTWERP

THE Vieille Boucherie.



But within a period of ten years two events took place, the first of which destroyed the internal beauty of the Cathedral, and the second of which began the downfall of the commercial prosperity of the city. [Pg 247]

In 1566 the yearly Ommegang was fixed for Sunday, August 18. Those who have seen the crowds which, in our own time, gather in the towns of Belgium when the streets are perambulated by the processions which still are so attractive to the people of the Catholic Netherlands, may form some conception of the intense hostility which was excited in the hearts of the Reformers by the superstitious reverence paid to the jewelled image of the Virgin, which was that day carried through the streets of Antwerp. For the Inquisition had already been at work for fifteen years, and thousands had already gone to the scaffold or perished at the stake, and no man's life was safe who did not bow the knee at the bidding of the gloomy despot who was persecuting the country in the name of the Catholic Church. The image of the Virgin, the gorgeous vestments of the priests, the ornaments of the churches, the banners of the religious societies, the incense which filled the air, nay, the very Host itself, were all so many symbols of oppression. No wonder, then, that after the procession had returned to the Cathedral the battle-cry of 'Long live the Beggars!' was like a match applied to gunpowder, and that the fury of the common people broke out. Seventy marble altars, among them an altar of the Holy Sacrament which had been forty years in building, were destroyed. Three organs, the finest in Christendom, were shattered into splinters. The woodwork of the church, stalls, confessionals, pulpits, carved chairs, were broken up. The statues of the saints were cast down. The magnificent vessels of gold and silver, the richly embroidered robes and banners, were trampled under foot. The beautifully tinted windows were demolished. The image of the Virgin was torn to pieces. When the work of Vandalism came to an end, it was wonderful that the building itself had escaped destruction. [Pg 248]

No blood was shed by the Protestants when they wrecked the Cathedral of Antwerp, not even that of a single priest; no woman was insulted, nor was any plunder carried away by the rioters.^[46] But in ten years came the orgy of robbery, murder, and rape known as 'The Spanish Fury.'

ANTWERP

OLD houses in the Rue de l'Empereur.



The citadel, built by Alva to overawe the town, was occupied in 1576 by a garrison of Spaniards whose pay was in arrears, and who cast longing eyes on the El Dorado lying ready to their hands. The defenders were a body of Germans and Walloons who had just come from Brussels. These were mercenaries and not to be depended on, and the burghers themselves were not so hardy as of old. On the morning of November 4 the Spaniards, reinforced by a troop of mutineers from Alost, rushed through a thick mist which hung over the marshes of the Scheldt, and burst into the city. For three long days the streets ran blood. Men, women, and children were put to the sword without mercy. Public buildings and private dwellings were plundered. The whole town was set on fire. Women were violated; there were cruel torturings; and every possible crime was committed. Many were drowned in the river while trying to escape. Piles of dead lay in the Grande Place. Of the Hôtel de Ville, where the Burgomaster and most of the magistrates met their death, nothing remained but the bare walls. The archives of the city perished in the flames. Eight thousand corpses lay among the smouldering ruins—for this massacre was more deadly than the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day. The city, which had been a world of wealth and splendour, was changed into a charnel-house, and from that time its commercial supremacy was blasted.^[47] Within four years of the Spanish Fury almost the whole trade of Antwerp had been transferred to Amsterdam, and the time of the final catastrophe was at hand. [Pg 249]

The Pacification of Ghent, which bound all the provinces of the Netherlands in a league against Spain, followed hard on the Spanish Fury of Antwerp; but the northern and the southern provinces quickly drifted apart, and in three years were rent in twain. The diplomacy of the Prince of Parma was as fatal to the cause of freedom as the fires of Alva. Holland stood firm and was saved in the long, weary struggle. Belgium halted between two opinions, and was lost. Brussels, the political capital, held out until it was starved into surrender; Bruges capitulated; and most towns of note sooner or later were taken, or made their peace humbly with Spain. But to obtain possession of Antwerp was a matter of far greater importance than the fate of any other town, and the siege, which Parma conducted with so much energy and skill, was the most serious military operation during the contest in the Netherlands. For Antwerp, though doomed to destruction by the Spanish Fury and sinking rapidly, was still the commercial capital of the Netherlands. 'Antwerp was the hinge on which the fate of the whole country, perhaps of all Christendom, was to turn. "If we get Antwerp," said the Spanish soldiers—so frequently that the expression passed into a proverb—"you shall go to Mass with us; if you save Antwerp, we will all go to conventicle with you."^[48] The population was large, about one hundred thousand. The Hôtel de Ville, the centre of the civic life, had already been rebuilt; the city, in spite of its frightful loss of trade, had not yet abandoned all hope of recovering its position; and William the Silent, before his death in 1584, had pointed out the means of defence—to destroy the dykes which kept the Scheldt within its bed, and flood all the meadows round the city, so as to prevent the Spaniards blockading the river by erecting a bridge, which would bar the passage of the ships on which the city would—in the event of a siege—depend for supplies of food. This advice was not taken. The Guild of Butchers, whose flocks fed on the meadows which it was proposed to flood, objected, met in the Vleechhuis, and sent a deputation to the magistrates, who quailed before them. Other guilds, together with most of the citizens, refused to believe that the Scheldt could be bridged, and the magistrates decided not to follow the plan of [Pg 251]

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the Prince of Orange. Parma, therefore, was able to occupy the banks of the river, and to build forts which threatened the town and protected the army of workmen who were soon busily engaged in constructing the bridge which was to close the channel. At the same time, while his own position remained dry, the dykes at some distance had been opened, and the plains for miles around were turned into a waste of shallow water.

ANTWERP

ARCHWAY under the *Vieille Boucherie*.



The siege lasted for seven months. For some time food reached the city in ships which succeeded in forcing their way up from Flushing and past the Spaniards; but blockade-runners expect a big return for their risks, and when the magistrates were so foolish as to put a limit on the price of wheat, the supplies from outside came to an end. The building of the bridge went on, slowly but surely. The weather was cold and stormy. The river, in winter flood, made the task almost impossible; but the Spaniards toiled on with wonderful patience and courage, and at last, on February 25, 1585, their work was finished, and the Scheldt was closed. The garrison made desperate efforts by sallies, fire-ships—everything they could think of—to destroy Parma's work, but all in vain. The citizens trembled at the prospect of a famine. England and Holland were sending help; but stout hearts like those which, a century later, maintained the defence of Londonderry till the boom was broken, were not to be found in Antwerp. Negotiations were opened, and, after a long time spent in discussing terms, the capitulation was signed on August 17, 1585. The terms of the surrender were not hard. An amnesty was granted, and the garrison received the honours of war; but on one point Philip was inexorable—there must be no liberty of conscience, no religion but that of Rome.

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What this meant to Antwerp was soon apparent. The Reformation had many disciples there.^[49] They were called upon to choose between giving up their religion or leaving the country. A period of two years was fixed, during which the Protestant merchants and the Protestant workmen of Antwerp, on whose business capacity and labour the prosperity of the city depended, might leave their places of business and abandon their homes; and in order that the rising generation should breathe, from their earliest days, a purely orthodox atmosphere, Parma was instructed to see that the selection of teachers was left in the hands of the Jesuits, so that no Protestants should have a voice in the education of the young. Antwerp suffered from this policy of intolerance in the same way as, exactly one hundred years afterwards, France suffered from the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The flower of the population left, carrying with them what remained of their wealth and, a greater loss, their skill and habits of industry. 'The poor city is most forlorn and poverty-stricken, the heretics having all left it,' were Parma's own words.^[50]

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ANTWERP

THE Concierge of the Musée Plantin-Moretus.



The people of Antwerp might well have applied to themselves the words used by Gerard Truchses of Cologne, when lamenting the supineness of the German Princes during the death struggle against Rome and the Escorial: 'We shall find our destruction in our immoderate desire for peace.' Peace they had obtained, but a peace which brought them no relief, and left them face to face with starvation; for Sidney—that Sidney of whom tradition tells the well-known story of his cup of water given to the wounded soldier—saw to it that not one bushel of wheat was carried up the Scheldt past Flushing, which he held as Governor for the Queen of England, to what was now a Spanish town.^[51] [Pg 255]

For twenty-four years the Scheldt was rigorously blocked by the fleets of Holland; and the commerce of Antwerp, which Parma would fain have restored, disappeared altogether. A gleam of hope came when, in 1609, the Twelve Years' Truce was signed at Antwerp by the representatives of the Archdukes Albert and Isabella and the States-General of Holland. But the city had fallen so low that many years would scarcely have sufficed to raise it; and whatever progress followed the truce came to an end with the Treaty of Münster. The closing of the Scheldt had become a political dogma with the Dutch; and the fourteenth article of the treaty kept it closed against the trade of Brabant and Flanders, to the great benefit of the seaports of Holland.^[52] [Pg 256]

About the year 1590, amongst the pupils at one of the schools established by the Jesuits at Antwerp after the great siege, was a boy whose parents had given him the Apostolic name of Peter Paul. His father was Joannes Rubens, a distinguished lawyer, who had been a magistrate of Antwerp at the time of the image-breaking in the Cathedral, and whose name was in the list of persons suspected of Calvinism. The Burgomaster and magistrates solemnly assured the Government that he was above suspicion; but Rubens, who undoubtedly was a Calvinist, fearing the Inquisition, left the city and went to Germany with his wife. There he was involved in an intrigue with Anna, daughter of the Elector Maurice, and second wife of William the Silent. Rubens was sent to prison, and thereafter banished to Siegen, where his wife joined him. The Princess, after being kept in close confinement for some years, died in 1577. In that year, the year before the Spanish Fury, and on June 28, being the Eve of the Festival of St. Peter and St. Paul, was born the boy who afterwards became the famous painter. Ten years after the birth of his son Joannes Rubens died at Cologne, and his widow, returning to Antwerp, took up her abode in the house where she had formerly lived with her husband, in the Place de Meir. There young Rubens passed his schooldays. If the cupboards were bare at Antwerp at that time, the confessionals were full, and the widow, having abjured the errors of Calvinism, sent her son to the schools which, ever since the surrender to Parma, had been in the hands of the Catholic clergy.^[53] [Pg 257]

When his education was finished he went to learn painting from Venius, whose studio was then in a street called the Rue Sale,^[53] because, it is said, of its extreme dirtiness, and also from Van Noort, who taught in the Rue du Jardin. Thereafter he travelled for eight years in Italy and Spain, gaining friends and painting, always painting, and studying art. News reached him that his mother was ill, and he hurried back to Antwerp, but found on his arrival that she was already dead. Having no longer any home ties, he was on the point of returning to Italy, and Antwerp nearly lost him, when the Archdukes Albert and Isabella persuaded him to remain. This was in 1608. Next [Pg 258]

year he married Isabelle, daughter of Jean Brant, town clerk of Antwerp, and set up house in the Rue du Couvent, where many of his best-known works were painted.

He soon, however, built the mansion in which he lived for the rest of his life, in what is now called the Rue Rubens,^[54] to the south of the Place de Meir. He drew the plans himself on the model of some palace he had known in Italy, painted frescoes on the walls, and filled it with curios he had collected during his travels. In his large garden he put up a domed 'Pantheon,' where he arranged the paintings, antique statues and busts, cameos, medals, vases of porphyry, and other treasures which his friends in Italy sent him. His studio was a vast room, from which the largest canvases were easily brought down by a staircase which one of his biographers describes as like that of a royal palace.

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We know a great deal about his mode of life at Antwerp, and how he was sent journeying on diplomatic errands by the Court of Albert and Isabella to France, Spain, Holland, England, and everywhere received with honour. At home, early in the morning (he rose at four in summer), having already been to Mass, he is at work in his studio, and loves to listen as he paints to some friend who will read to him from Cicero or Plutarch, or, brush in hand, talks with endless vivacity to the guests who have come to call on him. After a walk in his garden he dines frugally and very soberly, for he dreads, we are told by Van Hasselt, the effect of wine on his imagination; and then he works on in his studio till late in the afternoon, when he mounts one of his fine horses and rides till after sunset. In the evening he sups as frugally as he dined, and finishes the day at home in a circle of his most intimate friends, the only society for which he cared. This busy, happy life of Antwerp's greatest citizen closed on May 30, 1640. The statue in the Place Verte^[55] was erected to commemorate the two-hundredth anniversary of his death; but the fruit of his laborious days is the best monument of his fame.

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Close to the Place Verte is the Marché du Vendredi, where, in 1578, Christopher Plantin, 'the Rubens of the printing-press,' set up his works. The story of Plantin's life is a romance of labour. He was born at Tours in 1514, of a wealthy family called Tercelain; but, his father having lost his fortune, he changed his name to Plantin, and found employment at Caen as a bookbinder. Having married there, he went to Antwerp, and opened a small shop, in which he worked at his own trade while his wife sold cloth. The story goes that one night during the carnival he was wounded by some masqueraders, who mistook him for another person. To hush up the affair they paid him a sum of money, with which he bought a press and types, began to print almanacs and books for children, and did this so well that he soon had a flourishing business.

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ANTWERP

THE Place Verte.



The first important work produced at the Plantin Press was 'L'Instruction d'une Fille de Noble Maison,' a translation from the Italian, which appeared in 1555. His reputation grew, and in thirteen years he was able to purchase the site at the Marché du Vendredi. His name, like that of

Joannes Rubens, was on the list of suspected Calvinists after the image-breaking, and his printing-house was searched. But nothing was found to support the charge of heresy, and his orthodoxy must have been established beyond doubt, for Philip not only employed him to produce the famous Polyglot Bible, but gave him the monopoly of printing missals and breviaries for the whole of the Spanish Empire.

After his death in 1589, the business, which now had branches in Paris, Leyden, and Frankfort, was carried on by his son-in-law, Jean Mourentorff, whose family afterwards changed their name, in accordance with the pedantic fashion of the day, to Moretus. The Musée Plantin-Moretus, with the dwelling-rooms and their Renaissance furniture; the type and presses of the sixteenth century; the old proof-sheets, looking as if the printer's reader had just left them; the tapestry and paintings; and the quaint courtyard with the aged vine-tree, which traditions say was put there by Plantin himself—is the place of all others where some idea may be formed of the family life and surroundings of a wealthy business man in the Netherlands 300 years ago.

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But though Rubens had painted and the firm of Plantin had printed and grown rich, the Scheldt was all the time rolling down to the sea with scarcely one sail upon it; and the shipping trade of Antwerp was still at the mercy of the Dutch when the eighteenth century came in. The Treaty of Utrecht gave the Catholic Netherlands to Austria, but did not free the Scheldt. On the contrary, the stipulations of the Treaty of Münster were confirmed; and when in 1785, a century since Parma took Antwerp, Joseph II. demanded the opening of the great river, this same Treaty of Münster was unrolled as a reply. Thus, when the French Revolution came, and the army of the Republic took possession of the Austrian Netherlands, the Scheldt had been blocked and the shipping trade of Antwerp ruined for more than 200 years.

ANTWERP

THE Musée Plantin-Moretus (the Arrière Boutique).



In November, 1792, the Convention declared the Scheldt a free river, and ordered its Generals to carry out this declaration by force of arms against the Dutch. Mr. Pitt was ready to remain neutral in the war between France and Austria; but to this infringement of the Treaties of Münster and Utrecht, which had given the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt to the Dutch, he would not agree. Apart from the question of treaty rights, that the coast-line from the Scheldt westwards, with Antwerp at one end and Dunkirk at the other, and from the Scheldt northwards to the Texel, should be in the hands of France suggested a constant danger of invasion; to say nothing of possible injury to the commerce of England from the restrictions which an unfriendly Power might place on English trade with Antwerp, if Antwerp, as was certain, became once more a great seaport when the Scheldt was free. England was about to recognize the Republic when this question of Holland and the Scheldt made war inevitable. Thus once more Antwerp was the hinge on which the peace of Europe turned.

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Though the Scheldt became a French river in 1797, after the Treaty of Campo Formio, and though the Convention of The Hague had already abolished the shipping dues, Antwerp had made no progress towards recovery when Napoleon went there in 1803. He deepened the harbour, strengthened the fortifications, expended immense sums on improving the communications with Amsterdam and other places in the Netherlands, and purposed making the great seaport opposite the mouth of the Thames his chief naval station. He even planned the building of a new city. England was equally aware of the value of Antwerp. The Walcheren expedition, that costly failure, [56] was undertaken to strike a blow at this vital spot; and the Conference of Chatillon, in 1814, broke down because Napoleon would not relinquish Antwerp. He could not make up his mind to let it go. Long afterwards he said: 'Antwerp was to me a province in itself. It was the principal cause

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of my exile to St. Helena; for it was the required cession of that fortress which made me refuse the terms offered at Chatillon. If they would have left it to me, peace would have been concluded.' And it was still in his possession when the end came. Carnot was there—'iron Carnot, far-planning, imperturbable'—and held the fortress till the Emperor abdicated.

Trade revived with the creation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. By 1830 the population had increased to between 70,000 and 80,000. There was a strong Orange party in the city during the Belgian Revolution, for the Scheldt is to Antwerp what the Nile is to Egypt—its life; and the union with Holland insured the freedom of the river.

Antwerp, however, suffered more at that time from the Dutch than Brussels. General Chassé, an old soldier of the Empire, who had lived there for some years, was in command of the troops in the citadel.^[57] He had under him between 2,000 and 3,000 men. The forts and ramparts were armed with nearly 300 heavy guns, and in the Scheldt, close to the town, were nine ships of war. An exchange of shots between some of the Belgian insurgents and the Dutch was followed by a furious bombardment. For seven hours the citadel, the forts on the other side of the river, and the ships continued their fire. The houses shook with the noise of the big guns and the rattle of musketry. The terror and confusion were indescribable in the streets, which were lighted up, after darkness fell, by the flames roaring from the Church of St. Michael, which was burned to the ground. A great deal of damage was done, but fortunately the ships were so close to the shore that their shot passed over the housetops, otherwise the whole of Antwerp might have been destroyed. The spire of the Cathedral was a conspicuous object, rising high above the Place Verte in the most crowded part of the town. The shells flew past it and over it, but only three did any harm, one bringing down a turret, and two crashing through the roof and bursting in the nave.

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The wind carried the sound of the cannonade to Brussels, where, after sunset, the people saw the sky glowing red in the east; and some members of the Revolutionary Government were sent to Antwerp, who arranged an armistice. The Dutch remained in possession of the citadel; but this bombardment, which took place on October 27, 1830, put an end to the last lingering hopes of a reconciliation between the Belgian provinces and the House of Orange-Nassau.

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ANTWERP

THE roadstead from the Tête de Flandre.



Since 1830 the trade of Antwerp has increased enormously, and not very long ago the Scheldt was so congested with shipping that no vessels were allowed up unless they were regular liners, as there were no free berths in the docks. This fact speaks for itself. Antwerp is now the greatest port on the continent of Europe. In the world London stands first, with New York second, but Antwerp comes third; and to meet this huge trade three miles of additional quays are to be constructed within the next few years. Last year the Burgomaster of the city said that the mercantile marine of Great Britain was so pre-eminent there that Antwerp was, 'from a commercial point of view, one of the most important British ports in the world.' Germany and England, however, are engaged in a struggle for supremacy. They are ahead of all rivals; but the shipping companies of Hamburg and Bremen are the most powerful in the city, and, although during the last twenty years British trade has steadily increased at Antwerp, German trade has increased still more, and seems to be rapidly overtaking that of England.

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The presence in force of the German element on the banks of the Scheldt is the most striking feature of modern Antwerp. An extraordinary hold on its commerce and industries has been secured, as well as on the social life of the city. The Chamber of Commerce is full of German members. There is a German colony many thousands strong. There are German clubs and schools,

and numberless clerks from all parts of Germany are to be found in business houses. These facts give some colour to the prediction, so often heard, that the time is approaching when Antwerp will be under the German Zollverein, and that this will be the first step towards the realization of those ambitions which, beginning with a commercial alliance with Holland and Belgium, are to find their victory in the absorption of those countries, or, at least, of Holland and Antwerp, in the German Empire. It is well known that the Netherlands believe their independence to be in danger. The Belgian Government purposes spending millions in extending the fortifications of Antwerp. On all hands the durability of the settlement made by the Conference of London in 1830-1831 is called in question.

Great interests are involved; and it is within the possibilities of the future that Antwerp may be, yet once again, the hinge on which the peace of Europe turns. The mouth of the Scheldt is still where it was in the days of Napoleon—opposite the mouth of the Thames.

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FOOTNOTES

- [45] Moke, p. 390 (3rd edition).
- [46] See Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, part ii., chap. ii., for the evidence as to this.
- [47] Motley, *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, part iv., chap. vi.
- [48] Motley, *History of the United Netherlands*, chap. v.
- [49] 'Nulle part en Belgique les nouvelles croyances n'avaient jeté des racines aussi profondes' (Moke, 426). The Rue de Tournai was the quarter where most Calvinists were to be found. From the list of suspected persons, drawn up in 1567, it would appear that barely half a dozen families living there were free from the charge of heresy.—THYS: *Historique des Rues et Places Publiques de la ville d'Anvers*, p. 77.
- [50] 'In a very few years after the subjugation of Antwerp, it appeared by statistical documents that nearly all the manufactures of linen, coarse and fine cloths, serges, fustians, tapestry, gold embroidery, arras-work, silks and velvets, had been transplanted to the towns of Holland and Zeeland, which were flourishing and thriving, while the Flemish and Brabantine cities were mere dens of thieves and beggars.'—MOTLEY: *History of the United Netherlands*, Appendix to chap. v.
- [51] The Battle of Zutphen, at which Sir Philip Sidney received the wound from which he died, was fought on October 2, 1586, thirteen months after the surrender of Antwerp.
- [52] The proper reading of Article XIV. of the Treaty of Münster was disputed. See De Gerlache, i. 70. However, 'Quoi qu'il en soit,' says Baron De Gerlache, 'l'Escant demeura fermé; les Hollandais en tenaient les deux rives; le commerce d'Anvers et de la Belgique fut ruiné par la faiblesse et la lâcheté de l'Espagne, et par la connivence égoïste des autres puissances.'
- [53] Now the Rue Otto-Venius.
- [54] Then the Rue de la Bascule, or 'Wapper,' a broad street with a canal in the middle, filling up, apparently, the space between the east side of the modern Rue Rubens and the west side of the modern Rue Wappers. In 1611, when Rubens built his house, the canal which used to run down the middle of the Place de Meir had been vaulted over for some time.
- [55] The churchyard of the Cathedral till 1784.
- [56] Napoleon thought that the expedition was wisely conceived, and that, if it had not been so foolishly executed, Antwerp might have been taken by a *coup de main*. As to the tactics of the English Generals, 'C'était le comble de la bêtise et de l'inhumanité,' he said (O'Meara, *Napoleon at St. Helena*, i., 238).
- [57] 'Il commandait depuis quelques années à Anvers, où ses aventures amoureuses lui avaient donné une terrible réputation. C'était une sorte de Lovelace en cheveux blancs, forte redouté des mères de famille.'—DE LEUTRE, ii. 81.

LIÉGE AND THE ARDENNES

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LIÉGE AND THE ARDENNES

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CHAPTER XIX

THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIÉGE

THE map of Belgium during the Middle Ages, and down to the period of the French Revolution, shows the outlines of a large territory lying to the south of Brabant. On the west it extends to the

French dominions; on the east are Germany and the Duchy of Limbourg; the Duchy of Luxembourg bounds it on the south. This territory was known as the Principality of Liège.

The aspect of this part of Belgium is entirely different from that of the other provinces. The River Semois, rising near Arlon, the capital of Belgian Luxembourg, flows through quiet meadows, a slow and placid streamlet, bordered by rushes and willow-trees, till it reaches the western extremity of the mountainous forests of Ardennes. There it enters a narrow winding valley, thickly wooded, with rocky dells, and banks so precipitous that in some places there is not even a footpath, and travellers must pass from side to side in boats when making their way along the margin of the stream. Emerging from this defile, it crosses the French frontier, and joins the Meuse near Monthermé. From thence the Meuse flows to the north till it enters Belgium a short distance beyond the town of Givet.

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The romantic valley of the Meuse stretches on for miles, past Hastière, with its abbey of the eleventh century, peaceful Waulsort, in former times a Benedictine settlement, but now a favourite summer resort, and the picturesque château of Freyr, with its well-ordered gardens. On either side are steep slopes clothed with trees, and broken here and there by bold, outstanding pinnacles of rock. The sweet village of Anseremme straggles along the road beside the river; and near it the Lesse rushes down, between overhanging trees and towering cliffs, to meet the Meuse. Then comes Dinant, nestling on the right bank of the river, below the fortress which rises on the steep hillside. From Dinant the Meuse winds on to where the Sambre joins it at Namur, and so onwards to Liège and Maestricht.

THE CHÂTEAU DE WAULSORT ON THE MEUSE



To the south of this valley of the Meuse, for mile after mile, a broad, undulating tableland is covered by thick forests, where deer and wild boars abound, or opens out into a wide rolling country, dotted with villages, farm-houses, church spires, modern châteaux, and the ruins of feudal strongholds perched on inaccessible rocks.

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The appearance of this region has thus nothing in common with any other part of Belgium, with the flat, densely populated plain which extends southwards from the coast of Flanders. The people, too, are different—of quite another type, and speaking, most of them, another tongue. For this is the country of the Walloons, that hard-working race whose aptitude for strenuous labour distinguishes them from the light-hearted, easy-going people of Flanders and Brabant, and whose language is a form of old French mingled with words derived from German roots.

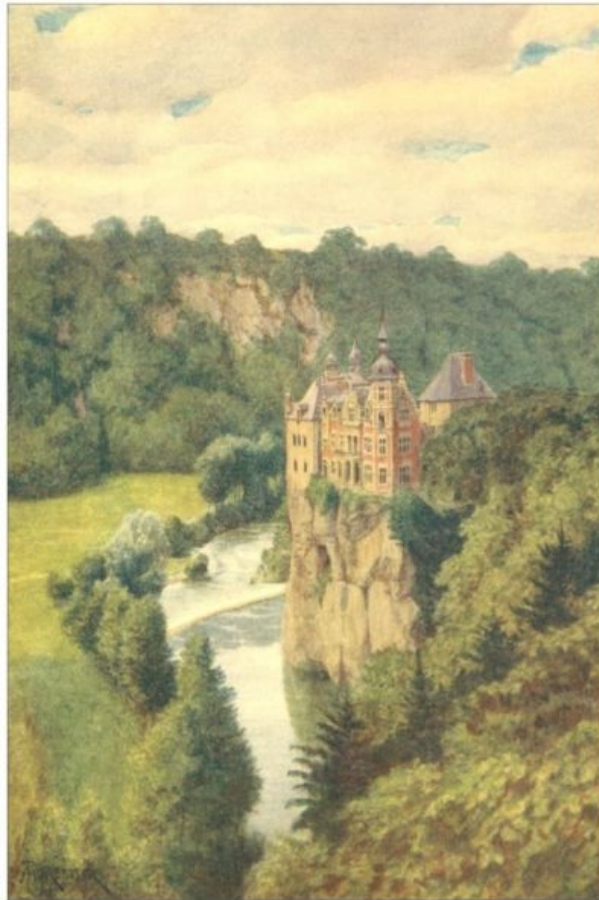
While, moreover, the old-time history of northern Belgium is the history of great commercial cities, rolling in wealth and trading to all parts of the world, with the merchant princes and the members of the guilds for their great men, the history of these southern provinces is the long story of how the Principality of Liège was evolved out of the chaos of small lordships which existed in the sixth century, and was governed, not by laymen, but by a dynasty of priests, who made war and concluded alliances on equal terms with the surrounding princes. It is a story of feudal barons, of the romance of chivalry, of terrible deeds, of ferocious bandits, of bishops who led armies into the field and shed blood like water, often for very trifling causes.

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When, at the end of the fifteenth century, Belgium was the most opulent country in Europe, the valley of the Meuse and the wide forest of Ardennes remained a waste. When, under the house of Burgundy, Flanders and Brabant flourished and grew rich, the Principality of Liège was impoverished and steeped in misery. It remained separate and independent, and has, therefore, a history of its own—the history of a State governed by the clergy, the nobles, and the people; where taxes could not be levied without the assent of these three estates; where no man could be condemned except by the judges, and in accordance with the laws; where such a thing as arbitrary

arrest was unknown, at least in theory; where the home of the poorest subject was inviolable; but where, in spite of all these privileges, year after year saw one revolution follow another, all the horrors of foreign and domestic war, and innumerable acts of cruelty, oppression, and treachery.

CHÂTEAU DE WALZIN, IN THE LESSE VALLEY



This state of things continued, with scarcely a pause, till the close of the seventeenth century, after which the country, though exhausted, prolonged its independence for another hundred years, till, with the rest of Belgium, it was annexed to France, and broken up into several departments. In later days, from the fall of Napoleon and the Congress of Vienna down to the present time, it has shared the fortunes of the modern kingdom of Belgium.

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The whole story cannot be told within the compass of a few pages; but enough may be set down to excite, perhaps, the interest of those who may chance to travel in this part of Europe.

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CHAPTER XX

EARLY HISTORY OF LIÉGE—BISHOP NOTGER—THE COURT OF PEACE

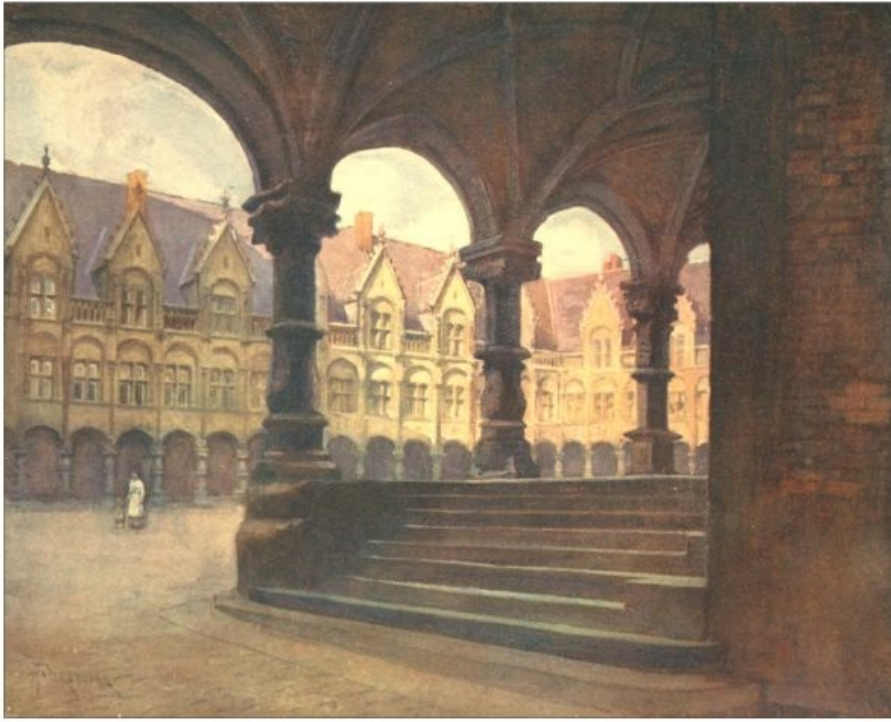
As to the town of Liége in early times, the story goes that one day St. Monulphe, Bishop of Tongres, being on a journey from Maestricht to Dinant, came to a rising ground, from which he saw a few wooden houses nestling beneath a mountain which overlooked the Meuse. Descending, he came to a streamlet which flowed into the river. He asked its name, and was told that it was called the Legia. Then the Bishop said to his companions that a great city, famous in the annals of the Christian Church, would arise on that spot. He built a small chapel there, which was replaced, in later years, by a splendid cathedral dedicated to St. Lambert, and laid the foundations of the temporal power of the Bishops of Liége by endowing the Church in the valley of the Meuse with lands which he possessed in the neighbourhood of Dinant.

But at that time, and for many years to come, Liége was an unimportant village inhabited by a few people; and it was not till the close of the seventh century that it became the seat of a bishopric, which was established there by St. Hubert about the year 697.

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St. Hubert was a son of the Duke of Aquitaine. Leaving his native country for political reasons, he took refuge at the Court of Pepin d'Herstal, father of Charles Martel, and grandfather of Charlemagne. Pepin's palace was then at Jupille, now a little town on the right bank of the Meuse, some three miles from modern Liége, but in those days the seat of a Court, and the favourite home of Pepin, who held royal sway over all the surrounding country.

THE EPISCOPAL PALACE—OUTER COURT, LIÉGE



The legend is well known of how Hubert was so devoted to the chase that he used to hunt even on the festivals of the Church, and how his conversion was brought about by seeing a stag one Good Friday with a shining cross between its horns. More sober history attributes the change of life which turned the mighty hunter into a priest to the pious counsels of St. Lambert, Bishop of Maestricht, who persuaded him to go on a pilgrimage to Rome, where he finally resolved to devote himself to the cause of religion. He was at Rome when the news came that Lambert had been murdered in revenge for having publicly censured the evil life of Pepin's mistress Alpaïde. On hearing of this tragedy the Pope made Hubert Bishop of Maestricht, and he removed the bishopric to Liège, which grew, under his rule, from a mere village into a large town surrounded by walls built on land given by Charles Martel, afterwards famous as the great champion of Christendom at the Battle of Tours, and son of that Alpaïde who was responsible for the death of Lambert. Municipal laws and courts for the administration of justice were established, and a regular system of government soon followed. Bishop Hubert spent much of his time among the woods and mountains, no longer as a hunter, but as a missionary; and the relics of the patron saint of huntsmen, who died in May, 727, are still preserved in a chapel at the town of St. Hubert, which lies in the midst of a wide forest on the southern tableland of the Ardennes.

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Liège prospered under the Emperor Charlemagne, who conferred important privileges on the town, and enriched the bishops, who gradually acquired that temporal power which they wielded for so long a time, after the vast empire of Charlemagne had fallen to pieces during the ninth century.

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The real founder of the temporal power of the bishop princes of the Principality of Liège seems to have been Notger, who was made Bishop by Otho the Great in the year 971. He strengthened the walls of the town, and made it known that law and order must be maintained within the diocese. But the great nobles had their feudal castles, from which they sallied forth to plunder and oppress their weaker neighbours, and close to Liège was the castle of Chèvremont. This stronghold stood on a hill near the site of the modern watering-place of Chaudfontaine, and was surrounded by the cottages of the baron's vassals, and by several chapels and religious houses founded by fugitives who had taken refuge there during the years of the Norman invasion, when Liège, Maestricht, Tongres, and the rich abbeys of Malmedy and Stavelot, had been laid waste.

When Notger came to the See of Liège, Immon, the châtelain of Chèvremont, was the terror of the whole country for miles around. He raided the villages, carried away the crops from the few cultivated fields, and sometimes rode into the suburbs of Liège, made prisoners of the inhabitants, and held them to ransom. The people implored Notger to protect them, but for a long time he could find no means of subduing, or making terms with, his formidable neighbour. At last, however, he saw an opportunity. The lady of Chèvremont having given birth to a son, her husband, being resolved that only some high dignitary of the Church should have the honour of baptizing his heir, requested the Bishop of Liège to perform the ceremony. Notger hesitated, but in the end sent a message that he would do what was required of him.

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On the appointed day the Seigneur of Chèvremont from his watch-tower saw the Bishop approaching the castle at the head of a long procession of priests clothed in gorgeous vestments, and chanting psalms. Praising the zeal of the prelate who had come to baptize his son with such unusual pomp, he ordered the drawbridge to be lowered and the gates of the castle to be opened.

The procession entered, and, when all were assembled in the courtyard, Bishop Notger addressed Immon.

'Seigneur,' he said, 'this castle is no longer yours, but mine.'

'What do you mean?' asked Immon.

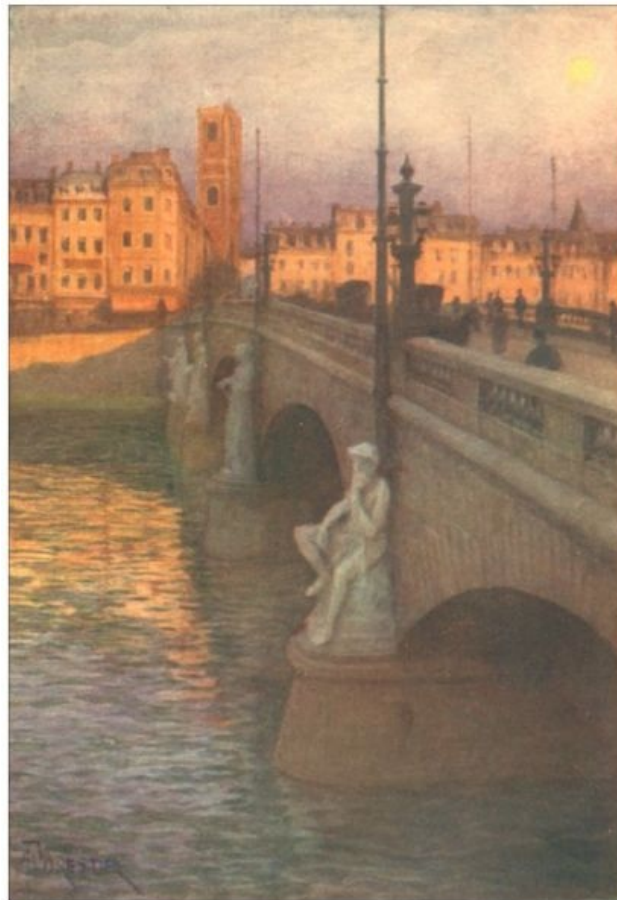
'I say,' replied the Bishop, 'that this place belongs to me, the only lord of the country. Immon, yield to necessity, and depart. I promise to give you full compensation.'

'It is fortunate for you,' exclaimed the châtelain, in a fury, 'that you entered my castle under a promise of safety, for otherwise you leave it torn in pieces! Scoundrel! Miserable priest! Fly, lest some evil befall you!'

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Instantly Notger gave a signal to his followers, who, throwing off the surplices, albs, and other ecclesiastical vestments which had covered their armour, and drawing the swords which had been concealed about them, rushed upon the inhabitants of the castle, and slaughtered them without mercy. It is said that Immon threw himself in despair over the walls, and that his wife perished miserably with her infant son. The castle was razed to the ground; the religious houses which clustered round it were destroyed; and the revenue of the chapels, which were also laid in ruins, served to enrich the churches of Liège and Aix-la-Chapelle.

PONT DES ARCHES, LIÈGE



Whatever may now be thought of this episode in church history, it made Bishop Notger more popular than ever. Otho the Great and his successors added to the gifts by which Charlemagne had enriched the bishopric; and in 1006, two years before the death of Notger, the Emperor Henry II. confirmed all these donations by a charter, in which Namur, Dinant, Tongres, Maestricht, Malines, Gembloux, St. Hubert, and other important places are named as pertaining to the diocese of Liège. Thus, at the beginning of the eleventh century, the Bishop of the Principality was already possessed of extraordinary power. A few years later the Countess of Hainaut, being then at war with Flanders, sought an alliance with the Bishop of Liège, and, in return for his help, accepted him as her feudal superior; and the Counts of Hainaut, themselves amongst the proudest nobles of that day, were vassals of Liège until the times of Charles the Bold.

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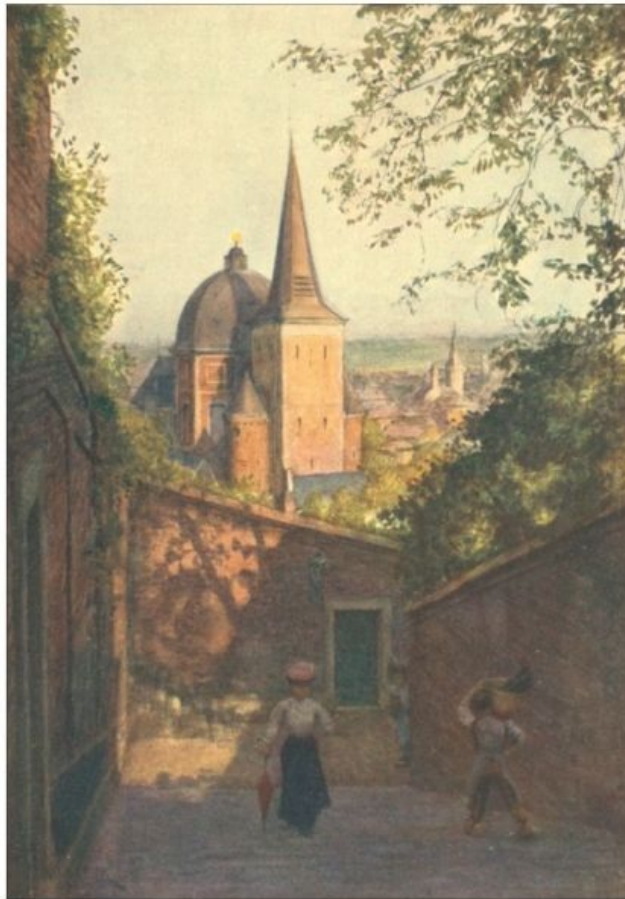
The frightful anarchy of the feudal period was nowhere worse than in this part of Europe. Murders, acts of revenge, robberies, took place without end. A state of war was the normal condition of society in the Valley of the Meuse and throughout the Ardennes. Noble fought against noble, and vassal against vassal. By the law or custom of these days, the feudal barons had the right of settling their disputes by force of arms; and their prince could not forbid them. But, though he could not interfere in his secular character, he could do so as bishop; and the influence of the Church, though the bishops themselves were often arrogant and ambitious, had been used to promote the cause of peace by proclaiming a truce of forty days, during which prayers were offered up for the souls of those who had fallen in battle. A 'quarantaine,' as it was called, being appointed for the death of each knight, there was sometimes a whole year of peace, during which

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enemies met on outwardly friendly terms, visited each other's châteaux, and went together to tournaments or village fêtes. Sometimes, during these periods of repose, families which had been at deadly feud intermarried, and ladies who had been made widows, or daughters who had become orphans, married the very warriors who had slain their husbands or fathers. But more frequently, as soon as the 'quarantaine' was over, every one set to work again, burning houses and killing each other as before.

At last Henri de Verdun, who became Bishop of Liège in 1075, resolved to stop, if possible, the private wars which were the scourge of society. He assembled the nobles of the Principality and the surrounding districts, and urged upon them the necessity of at least making an effort to put an end to the ceaseless strife in which they lived. 'The only means I can think of,' he said, 'is to choose a supreme judge, with power to punish those who are guilty of excesses.' The nobles consented to this proposal. He himself was appointed to the new office, and his successors in the bishopric of Liège were declared, for all time coming, judges of the 'Court of Peace.'

ESCALIER DE LA FONTAINE, LIÈGE



The rules of the 'Tribunal de Paix de Liège' decreed that on certain days it was unlawful to carry arms, and that any freeman who committed murder or acts of violence should be deprived of his estate and expelled from the Principality, while a slave was to be punished by the loss of whatever he might possess, and have his right hand cut off. From Wednesday to Monday, during the festivals of the Church, the *Trêve de Dieu* was to be strictly observed. The Peace Tribunal was to decide cases of assassination, rape, incendiarism, robbery, and other offences which might lead to a breach of the public peace. Anyone who did not appear before the court, after being duly cited, was to be declared infamous, and was liable to a sentence of excommunication. But the accused could—such was the warlike spirit of the times—always claim to have his case decided by judicial combat.

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The Dukes of Bouillon and Limbourg, together with the Counts of Luxembourg, Louvain, Namur, Hainaut, Montaigu, Clermont, and La Roche, signed the Act which established the 'Tribunal de Paix'; and they all swore to obey its decisions, except the Count of La Roche, who refused to take any oath whatever.

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On this the other barons made war upon him, and defeated him in a pitched battle. He fled to his castle and stood a siege of seven months, till, his provisions being exhausted, he saw nothing before him but surrender or starvation. Suddenly he thought of a stratagem. He fed a sow, the only animal which remained alive in the castle, with his last measure of wheat, and let it escape. The besiegers killed it, and, finding that it had just had a full meal, came to the conclusion that it was useless to continue the siege, as the garrison seemed well supplied with food. They therefore made peace with the Count of La Roche, who thus remained free from the jurisdiction of the Tribunal de Paix. The other barons also excused themselves; so did the clergy; and, in the end, the burghers of Liège refused to accept the decisions of the court, when, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, they obtained a great extension of their privileges under a charter granted by

Albert de Cuyck, who had come to the episcopal throne in 1195.

Whenever there was a vacancy in the See of Liége, all the princes of Belgium, and often those of other countries, tried to obtain the nomination for one of their relatives. In the year 1193 Albert de Louvain, who had been chosen against the wish of the Emperor Henry IV., was murdered at Rheims by a band of German knights, probably under secret orders from the Emperor, who forthwith put forward Simon de Limbourg, then only sixteen years of age, as Bishop of the Principality. Simon de Limbourg was supported by the Duke of Brabant; but the Counts of Flanders, of Namur, and of Hainaut, refused to accept him. The Pope suspended his election, and Albert de Cuyck, backed up by the Count of Hainaut, took possession of the bishopric, and went to Rome to prosecute his claim against that of Simon de Limbourg, which was still maintained before the Holy See. Simon de Limbourg died, or was made away with, at Rome, and de Cuyck became Bishop. [Pg 289]

He was now deeply in debt, having borrowed a large sum from the Count of Flanders, and spent it at Rome in bribery to secure his election as Bishop. This debt he got rid of by the sale of civil offices and ecclesiastical benefices; but more money was needed at Liége in order to repair the walls of the town. For this purpose a tax was laid, by decree of the Bishop and the civil magistrates, on the people and the clergy. The latter refused to pay, on the ground that they had not been consulted. The magistrates and the laity insisted that the clergy must bear their share of the common burden. The Bishop took the side of the people against the clergy, and in order to make himself popular granted a charter, which was confirmed by the Emperor Philip II. in 1208. [Pg 290]

This charter of Albert de Cuyck is an important landmark in the constitutional history of the Principality of Liége. It declared that the people might not be taxed without their own consent. It relieved them from the burden of lodging and feeding armed men, a constant source of discontent at that time; and it freed them from being compelled to follow the Bishop into battle, unless he was making war in defence of the Principality, and even then not till fifteen days after he had assembled his own immediate vassals. It provided that no officer of the law might enter a house to search for a thief or for stolen property without leave from the owner of the house. No freeman could be arrested or imprisoned except under a legal warrant. The justices of the town were to be the only judges in a trial for any crime committed within the walls. No stranger might challenge a burgher of Liége to trial by combat, but must prosecute him before the judges. During eight days before Christmas and Easter no arrest for debt was allowed, though at other times a debtor, against whom judgment had been given, must either pay at once, find security before sunset, or go to prison. [Pg 291]

These, and other provisions of a similar nature, were the regulations set forth in the charter of Albert de Cuyck, the principles of which were afterwards embodied, from time to time, in other public Acts. It was, like the Joyeuse Entrée of Brabant, merely a declaration of rights, many of which had previously existed; but it gave these rights the sanction and authority of written law. Thenceforth the people began to assert themselves, and for many long years to come the history of Liége is a record of revolutions and intestine wars, the populace rebelling either against the bishops or the barons, and of feuds between the bishops and the barons, in which the populace took part, sometimes on one side and sometimes on the other. The people of the Principality, as soon as they had obtained the charter, refused to accept the jurisdiction of the Peace Tribunal. Disputes were not settled, and one private war followed another. [Pg 292]

The most trifling incident was often the cause of a sanguinary struggle; but perhaps the most foolish of all was that known as the *Guerre de la Vache de Ciney*.

THE HOSPITAL, DINANT



A peasant of the province of Namur, named Jallet, went to a fair at Ciney, the chief town in the district of Condroz, in the forest of Ardennes, and there stole a cow belonging to one of the townsmen. He took the animal to Andenne, on the Meuse between Liége and Huy, where the Duke of Brabant and the Counts of Namur and Luxembourg, with many knights and ladies, had met for a tournament. One of the company was Jean de Halloy, the baillie of Condroz, and to him the owner of the cow, who had followed the thief, complained. The baillie promised pardon to Jallet on condition that he would take the cow back to Ciney. Jallet started, driving the wretched beast before him, but as soon as he entered the district of Condroz, the baillie had him arrested and hanged. On this Jean de Beaufort, feudal lord of Goesnes, the village in which Jallet had lived, assembled his friends, and proceeded to attack Condroz. Then the people of Huy flew to arms, and burned the château of Goesnes. Forthwith the Duke of Brabant, with the Counts of Flanders, Namur, and Luxembourg, joined in the fray, burned the town of Ciney, and threatened to devastate all the country round Liége. Next the people of Dinant came on the scene, invaded Namur and Luxembourg, burned many villages in the Ardennes, and slaughtered the villagers. For three years the war continued, until at last, when, it is said, no fewer than 20,000 people had been killed, and the whole country of the Ardennes, from Luxembourg to the Meuse, had been laid waste, the combatants came to their senses. It was resolved to end the struggle by arbitration. Philip the Hardy, King of France, agreed to act as peacemaker, and, being of opinion that both parties were equally to blame, decided that each must bear its own losses! History says nothing about what became of the cow.

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CHAPTER XXI

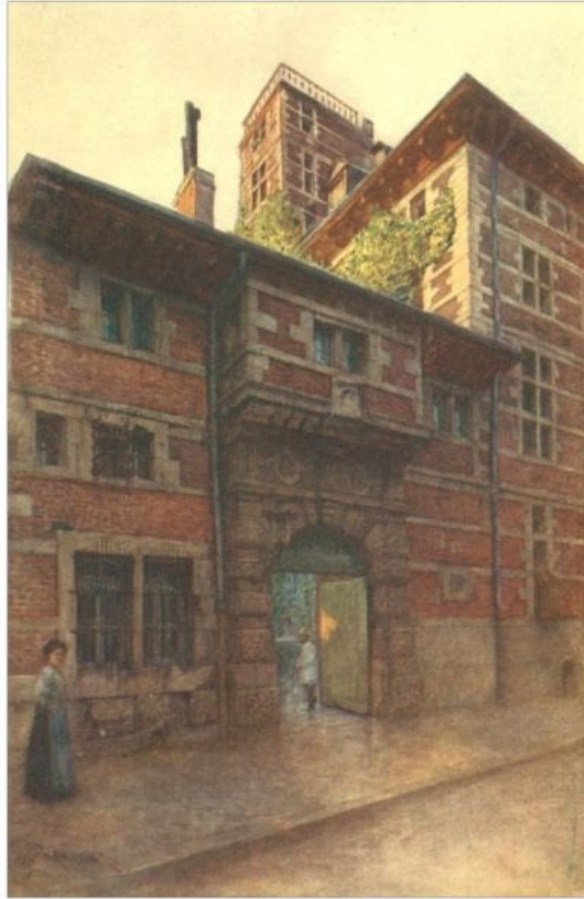
THE DUKES OF BURGUNDY—DESTRUCTION OF LIÉGE BY CHARLES THE BOLD

THE whole story of Liége and the Ardennes is full of episodes, like the war of the cow of Ciney. It would be easy to fill volumes with tales of adventures in the Valley of the Meuse, and under the walls of Liége—how castles were taken by strategy or by open assault; how ladies were carried off, and rescued by some daring feat of arms; how desperate encounters were fought out in the depths of the forest; how bandits roamed about, killing and robbing as they pleased; how almost the only place where a woman felt safe was a convent; how the peasants were oppressed; and how the common people of the towns lived in a state of chronic mutiny. All these things make up the story of how men and women lived in what is now one of the most peaceful regions in Europe. The glamour of chivalry does not conceal the fierce and revengeful spirit of every class. A history of this part of Belgium, written as Sir Walter Scott wrote the history of Scotland, would be as entertaining as the 'Tales of a Grandfather.'

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Nowhere could a richer field be found for the plots of historical fiction; and it is not strange that the author of 'Ivanhoe' should have chosen it as the scene of a romance. In 'Quentin Durward' history is, of course, subordinate to fiction. The murder of the Bishop of Liège is represented as taking place fifteen years before its real date. The description of the tragedy has no resemblance to what actually happened. The people of the Principality are made to speak Flemish instead of French or their native Walloon. But such dry-as-dust criticisms would be absurd, and the 'true king of the romantics' has reproduced, with inimitable skill, the spirit of the long, bloody drama in which Louis of France and Charles of Burgundy were the chief actors.

LA MAISON CURTIUS, LIÈGE



About the middle of the fifteenth century the House of Burgundy was at the summit of its power, and held sway over Flanders and Brabant, Hainaut, Namur, and Luxembourg. But the ecclesiastical Principality of Liège, though wedged in between Brabant, Luxembourg, and Namur, remained a separate state. Ever since the charter of Albert de Cuyck the power of the commons had grown, and with it their determination to maintain their liberty and independence. Nor were the nobles more inclined to exchange the bishops for other rulers, especially if these were to be the Dukes of Burgundy. For the House of Burgundy had been detested in Liège since the winter of 1408, when Bishop John of Bavaria—*Jean sans Pitié*, as he was called by his subjects—had crushed a revolution, which his tyranny had produced, by calling to his aid the Duke of Burgundy and the Counts of Hainaut and Namur. On November 24, 1408, in a battle at Othée, near Tongres, the revolutionary army of Liège, 30,000 strong, had been defeated, and a massacre followed, the horrors of which had never been forgotten. The triumph of John of Bavaria and his merciless oppressions were due to the support which he received from the arms of Burgundy, and the result was that afterwards, during the struggle between Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, and France, the sympathies of Liège were always on the side of France.

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In 1430, when Jean de Heinsberg was Bishop of Liège, the Burgundian Governor of Namur forbade the town of Dinant to repair its walls. The men of Liège marched towards Dinant, burning castles and villages on their way. Another war seemed inevitable; but the Bishop, who had accompanied the army, apparently against his will, prevented this calamity by going on his knees to Philip and humbly asking pardon for the excesses which his vassals had committed. The people of Liège, however, indignant at this humiliation, became so turbulent that the Bishop was several times on the point of resigning. It appears, nevertheless, that his resignation was forced upon him by the Duke of Burgundy.

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Heinsberg had promised a certain benefice to Louis de Bourbon, the Duke's nephew, but gave it to another claimant. Philip having sent an envoy to demand an explanation, the Bishop said: 'Let His Highness have patience. I intend him for a better benefice than that.' 'Which?' he was asked. 'The one I hold myself,' he replied. He soon repented of this rash promise, and was about to journey into France and ask protection from the King, when Philip invited him to The Hague. There he was treated with all honour till the day of his departure, when the Duke suddenly asked him if he

intended to fulfil his promise about the bishopric. Heinsberg declared that he would certainly keep his word, but was, in spite of what he had said, taken into a dark room, where he found a Franciscan and an executioner, clothed in black and armed with a naked sword, awaiting him. 'Most Reverend Seigneur,' said the Franciscan, 'you have twice broken faith with the Duke. Resign at once, or prepare to die.'

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At these words, so the story goes, Bishop Heinsberg was so terrified that he signed his resignation on the spot in favour of Louis de Bourbon, who was not yet in Holy Orders, and was, indeed, a mere youth of eighteen, a student at the University of Louvain, whither his uncle had sent him to be educated. The Chapter of St. Lambert, by whom the bishops had always been chosen, complained; but the appointment was confirmed by the Holy See, and the whole spiritual and secular administration of the Principality passed into the hands of the young prelate.

This was a triumph for the House of Burgundy, which had long aimed at extending its influence to the Principality of Liège; but in it few years the clergy, the nobility, and the people united against the Duke's nephew, and combined to drive him from the management of their affairs. In order to protect themselves against Philip, who might interfere on behalf of his nephew, they appointed as regent Mark of Baden, brother-in-law of the Emperor Frederick III., who came to Liège attended by a body of German troops.

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The prospect of a war in the Belgian provinces, which would compel the Duke of Burgundy to withdraw a part of his army from France, was hailed with joy by Louis XI. He promised help, both in men and money, to the people of Liège, who forthwith assembled in arms. Charles the Bold, Philip's son, at that time known as the Comte de Charolais, was then fighting in France; but a force of Burgundians, sent by his father, had no difficulty in defeating the raw army of Liège, which, left to its own resources by the Germans, was cut to pieces on the field of Montenac in the autumn of 1465. Louis XI., instead of coming to the assistance of the Liégeois, sent a letter advising them to make peace with Philip before the redoubtable Comte de Charolais made his appearance in their territory; and a convention was signed which laid the Liégeois at the feet of the Duke of Burgundy, who became Regent of the Principality. Peace was duly proclaimed at the Perron in the market-place of Liège. But the ruling party at Dinant were so foolhardy as to declare war against Namur. On this Charles the Bold besieged Dinant.

Messengers sent from the Burgundian camp with a summons to surrender were murdered by the townsmen, who in a short time saw their walls breached by heavy guns brought from the arsenals of Brabant. Then they offered to negotiate for a capitulation, but the offer was refused. Dinant was taken, sacked, and burned. The Hôtel de Ville was blown up by an explosion of gunpowder. The cathedral was almost entirely destroyed. A number of wealthy citizens who had been made prisoners and confined in a building adjoining the cathedral were burned alive. Eight hundred persons, tied together in pairs, were thrown into the Meuse and drowned. The work of vengeance was not finished until every house had been demolished; for Charles of Burgundy had declared that a day would come when travellers, passing up the Valley of the Meuse, would ask where it was that Dinant had once stood.

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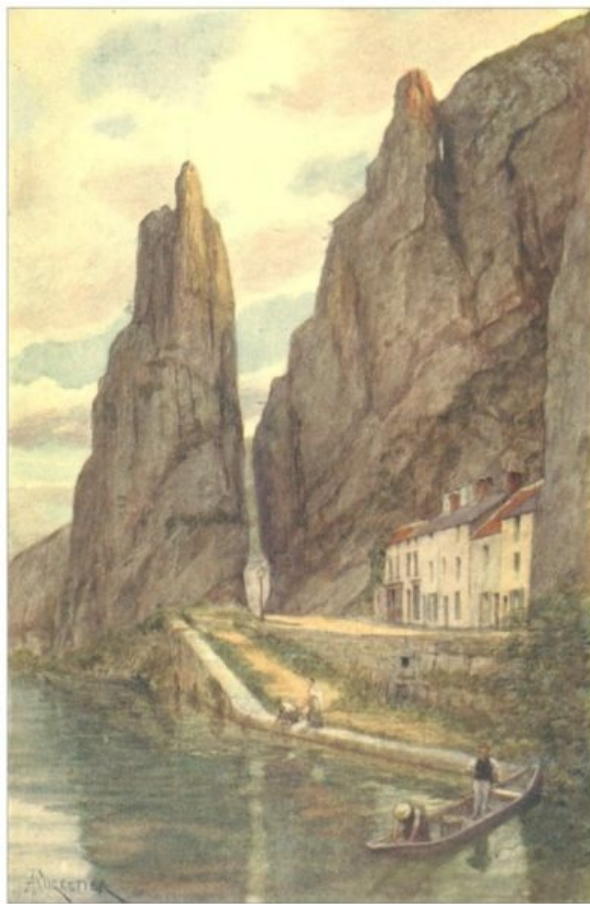
Philip the Good died at Bruges in June, 1467, and Charles the Bold became Duke of Burgundy. The new reign began with troubles in Flanders and Brabant, and these had scarcely been overcome when there was a fresh rising at Liège, so dissatisfied were the people with the terms of peace, which, arranged after the terrible Battle of Montenac, left them subject to the House of Burgundy. Frenchmen, sent by the King on the pretext of mediating between Louis de Bourbon and his vassals, encouraged the popular discontent, which rose to such a height that the town of Huy, where the Bishop lived, was attacked and plundered. The Bishop fled to Namur, but some of his servants and some partisans of Burgundy were slain. Charles, exasperated beyond all bounds, marched against Liège. On his arrival, 300 of the burghers came forth, imploring mercy and offering him the keys of the town. He spared their lives, but only on the condition that he was to enter the town and there dictate his own terms. This condition was accepted, and Charles rode in. The Bishop of Liège and Cardinal La Balue, the Ambassador of Louis XI., were with him. On one side of the street stood the burghers, and on the other the priests, all as penitents, with heads uncovered and torches in their hands. Charles dismounted at the Bishop's palace, where, a few days later, in the presence of a vast assemblage of people, he pronounced sentence on the town and Principality of Liège.

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Most of the privileges which had been granted from time to time since the charter of Albert de Cuyck were abolished. An appeal from the civil judges to the Bishop and his council was established. The seat of the bishopric was removed from Liège, and it was ordained that the spiritual court was to sit at Maestricht, Louvain, or Namur. The Bishop was forbidden to levy taxes on produce carried up or down the Meuse without leave from the Duke of Brabant, and the Counts of Hainaut and Namur. It was decreed that the people of the Principality must never take arms against Burgundy, go to war, or make alliances without the Duke's permission. The walls and gates of Liège, and of all other towns in the Principality, were to be destroyed; the manufacture of arms was forbidden; the Perron was to be removed, and the Duke was to do with it as he pleased.

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LE ROCHER BAYARD, DINANT



These articles, and many more, all of them framed for the purpose of curbing the spirit of the Liégeois, were embodied in the deed which was read aloud in the Bishop's palace on November 26, 1467. The Bishop and all the notables having sworn to obey it, Charles told them that if they kept true to their oath he, in return, would protect them. The sentence which was thus pronounced was rigorously executed. Many of the popular faction fled to France; others took refuge among the Ardennes; some were executed. The Perron was carried away to Bruges, and there engraved with an inscription full of insults to the people of Liége; the walls of the town were thrown down; spies went about the country districts watching the villagers and gathering information. So universal was the feeling of suspicion and fear, and so heavy were the taxes levied on the wealthy, that many families abandoned all their possessions and went into exile.

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These doings had been watched at Rome; and presently a papal legate, the Bishop of Tricaria, came to Liége, and advised Louis de Bourbon to resist the violence of the Duke's agents, and recall by degrees those who had fled or been banished from the country. But the youthful Bishop preferred to live at Brussels, where the brilliant and luxurious life of the Burgundian Court was in full swing. He took such delight in the fêtes for which the gay capital of Brabant was famous that he actually attempted to reproduce them in his own desolate Principality, and on one occasion came sailing up the Meuse from Maestricht in a barge painted with all the colours of the rainbow, and made his appearance before the ruined walls of Liége surrounded by musicians and buffoons.

Meanwhile, in the dark recesses of the Ardennes a band of the exiles had been wandering about, sleeping on the bare ground in the open air, clothed in rags, starving, and ready for mischief. These men, under the leadership of Jean de Ville, hearing that Liége was unguarded, and that war was likely to break out once more between Burgundy and France, marched from the forest to Liége, and complained to the Pope's legate. He went to the Bishop, who was then at Maestricht, and laid before him the miserable condition of the country. The Bishop promised that he would return to Liége; but Charles the Bold, from whom nothing was hid, wrote and told him that, as soon as he had settled his affairs with the King of France, he was coming to the Principality to punish these new rebels against his authority. On this the Bishop, instead of going to Liége, went with the legate to Tongres.

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This desertion drove Jean de Ville and his followers to despair. They made a night march to Tongres, surprised the Bishop's guards, some of whom they killed, and persuaded, or, rather, compelled, Louis and the Pope's legate to come with them to Liége. The war on which the insurgents counted when they thus captured the Bishop did not break out. On the contrary, negotiations had commenced, and ambassadors from France were discussing terms of peace with Charles at the very time of the raid on Tongres.

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The summer of 1468 was a time of splendour at the Court of Burgundy. On June 25 Margaret of York, attended by a brilliant company of English lords and ladies, sailed into the harbour of Sluis, where she was met by Charles the Bold. A week later they journeyed by the canal to the ancient town of Damme, where their marriage was celebrated at five o'clock on the morning of July 3. On that same day they entered Bruges in state, followed by a train of sixty ladies of the greatest families of England and Burgundy, and surrounded by nobles and princes who wore the Order of

the Golden Fleece. The famous tournament of the Tree of Gold was held, after the marriage feast, in the market-place, and the revels continued for eight days longer. All was bright and gay in Flanders; but far away among the Ardennes dark clouds were gathering over the Valley of the Meuse.

In the beginning of October the headquarters of the Burgundian army were at Peronne on the Somme. Louis XI. went thither with only a small escort, and sought an interview with Charles. Whatever his motive may have been for putting himself in the power of his rival, he had soon good reason to repent of his rashness. A party of Burgundians from Liége arrived at Peronne, accused the rebels of gross cruelty to the Bishop and to the Duke's friends, and asserted that some Frenchmen had taken part in the affair at Tongres. Charles, on hearing their statements, burst into one of his fits of uncontrollable anger. 'I know,' he cried, 'who is at the bottom of all this,' and forthwith locked up the King of France in the citadel of Peronne. After three days, during which Louis went in fear of his life, and Charles meditated all sorts of vengeance, the King was set free, and swore a solemn oath that he would assist Charles to punish the Liégeois.

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Then the allied forces of France and Burgundy marched into the Principality. When they approached Liége the Bishop and the papal legate met them, and endeavoured to make terms for the people, throwing themselves on their knees before Charles, and beseeching him not to punish the innocent and the guilty alike. The Bishop, it was pointed out, had pardoned the affront which he had received; but the Duke forbade them to speak of pardon. He was master, he said, of the lives and property of these incorrigible rebels, and he would do with them as he pleased. After this there was nothing more to be said. The doom of Liége had been spoken.

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A sally, made during the night by Jean de Ville and his men, though it threw the Burgundian outposts into confusion, had no effect but to increase the Duke's anger; and on Sunday, October 30, he entered the town at the head of his army, passing over the ruins of the old walls. There was no resistance. The streets were empty. The wealthier inhabitants, and all who had made themselves prominent in the recent disturbances, had fled to the Ardennes with their families, taking away as many of their possessions as they could carry. A great multitude of poor people, women, children, and old men, had concealed themselves in the cellars of their houses. Charles and the King rode through a deserted town till they came to the Hôtel de Ville. Here the Duke waved his sword on high, and shouted, 'Vive Bourgoyne!' The King of France drew his, and shouted likewise, 'Vive Bourgoyne!' and at this signal 40,000 soldiers were let loose.

OLD HOUSE OF THE QUAI DE LA GOFFE, LIÉGE



The people were dragged from their places of concealment and slain. Many who escaped immediate death ran to the churches for shelter. The priests, with crucifixes in their hands, came to the doors and implored the soldiers not to enter. They were cut down, and those whom they had tried to protect were killed, even on the steps of the altars. Old men and children were trampled underfoot. Young girls were outraged before their mothers' eyes, or put to death, shrieking and imploring mercy. Churches, convents, private houses were alike pillaged. Tombs were broken open in the search for plunder, and the bones of the dead were thrown out. Those who were suspected of possessing valuables were tortured to make them confess where their treasures were hidden. As the day went on every street in Liége ran with blood like a slaughter-house, till at last the soldiers grew tired of killing their victims one by one, and, tying them together in bundles of a dozen or more persons, threw them into the Meuse, where men and women, old and young, perished in one struggling mass. It is said that nearly 50,000 died, most of them in the town or by

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drowning in the river, but many from cold and famine among the Ardennes.

The horrors of the sacking of Dinant had been surpassed. Charles, however, was not yet satisfied. His real wish was to wipe Liège from the face of the earth—to destroy it utterly; but before doing so, he made a pretence of consulting Louis of France. The King, who understood him thoroughly, replied: 'Opposite my father's bedroom there was a tree, in which some troublesome birds had built their nest, and made such a noise that he could not sleep. He destroyed the nest three times, but they always returned. At last, on the advice of a friend, he cut down the tree, and after that he was able to repose in peace.'

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Charles took this hint as it was meant, and gave orders that Liège was to be set on fire, and every building of stone, except the churches and the houses of the clergy, pulled down. These orders were carried out to the letter. The flames consumed row after row of houses, and any edifice not made of wood was undermined by the pickaxes of an army of workmen who laboured for seven weeks, till at last nothing remained of Liège but churches and the dwellings of the priests standing forlorn amidst a heap of smoking ruins. While the work of destruction was in progress Charles embarked for Maestricht, sent the Pope's legate back to Rome with the news of what had befallen the bishopric of Liège, and, having ravaged all the country for miles around, departed for his own dominions.

The years passed on, and at last there came a time when the voice which shouted 'Vive Bourgoyne!' in Liège was silent, the sword fallen from the hand which had waved it as a signal for the massacre, and the proud head of the conqueror brought very low. On Tuesday, January 7, 1477, two days after the fight at Nancy, in which Duke René of Lorraine had defeated the Burgundian army, a young page, Jean Baptiste Colonna, son of a noble Roman house, was guiding a party who were searching for the body of Charles the Bold to where he thought he had seen his master fall during the battle. Not far from the town, near the chapel of St. Jean de l'Atre, they found a heap of dead men lying naked among snow and ice and frozen blood in the bed of a small stream. One of the searchers, a poor washerwoman who had served in the Duke's household, saw a ring which she recognized on a finger of one of the corpses, and exclaimed: 'Ah! Mon Prince!' When they raised the head from the ice to which it was frozen the skin of one cheek peeled off. Wolves or dogs had been gnawing the other. A stroke from some battle-axe had split the head down to the chin. But when the blood had been washed from the disfigured face it was known, beyond all doubt, for that of Charles the Bold.

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They buried him before the altar of St. Sebastian in the Church of St. George at Nancy, where the body of the great warrior remained till 1550. when, in the reign of Charles V., it was carried into Flanders, and laid beside that of his daughter Marie in the choir of Notre Dame at Bruges.

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CHAPTER XXII

THE WILD BOAR OF ARDENNES

THOUGH the churches and the houses of the clergy had been left standing, in accordance with the orders given by Charles the Bold in 1468, the town of Liège was ruined. After a time, however, those who had escaped with their lives began to return, and by degrees a new Liège arose. The Principality also recovered to some extent; but its prestige was so much diminished in the eyes of Europe that an alliance with the bishops was no longer, as of old, an object of ambition to other states.

On the death of Charles the Bold Louis de Bourbon, who was still Bishop, made up his mind to devote himself in future to the government of his Principality. As uncle of the young Duchess Marie, who was the only daughter of Charles by his second wife, Isabelle de Bourbon, he had sufficient influence at the Court of Burgundy to obtain important concessions in favour of Liège. A yearly tribute of 30,000 florins, which the late Duke had exacted, was remitted, and the Liégeois were promised the restoration of their ancient charters and privileges. The Perron, to the possession of which the people attached great importance, was sent back from Bruges, and the townsmen showed their gratitude to the Bishop by voting him a substantial sum of money.

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When he came to Liège, among the first to greet him was William de la Marck, head of the ancient house of Arenberg. Two of his ancestors had been Bishops of Liège, and the family was one of the greatest in the Principality. This William de la Marck had been a warrior from his youth. He was one of the handsomest men of his time, but to make himself an object of fear to his enemies he wore a long shaggy beard, and imitated the ferocious manners of the brigands who had from time immemorial haunted the most inaccessible part of the Ardennes. On his coat of arms there was the head of a wild boar, and, either for that reason or because of his fierce character, he was nicknamed the Wild Boar of Ardennes.

A PEASANT WOMAN OF THE ARDENNES



After the destruction of Liége Louis XI., anxious to raise fresh troubles in the Principality in order to embarrass Charles of Burgundy and the Bishop, had employed as his agent de la Marck, who, for the purpose of picking a quarrel with the Bishop, caused one of the vicars, against whom he had no cause of complaint, to be murdered in cold blood. His favourite haunt was the Castle of Aigremont, a fortalice perched on a hill above the left bank of the Meuse, to the west of Liége. This place the Bishop destroyed. Thereupon de la Marck, who let it be understood that he was acting in concert with the King of France, and by this means obtained a numerous following among the outlaws whom Charles of Burgundy had banished, declared open war against both Louis de Bourbon and the Duke. [Pg 315]

But when the Bishop returned to Liége, on the death of Charles and the accession of the Duchess Marie, de la Marck hastened to make peace. The Bishop granted him a pardon, made him Captain of the Guard and Governor of Franchimont, rebuilt the Castle of Aigremont, and loaded him with favours. But it was soon apparent that the Wild Boar was untamed. He set the rules of the Church at defiance, refused to go to Mass or confession, insisted on eating what he pleased in Lent, ruled all who were under his authority with a rod of iron, made himself universally hated by the nobles, and at last, taking offence at the remonstrances of the Bishop, resigned his appointments, and left the Court. It having been discovered that he was in correspondence with Louis XI., who was plotting the annexation of the Principality, a sentence of banishment was pronounced against him as a traitor. He retired into the Ardennes, where, assisted by gifts of arms and gold from France, he gathered a strong band of French, German, and Swiss adventurers. [Pg 316]

Suddenly, in August, 1482, news came to Liége that the Wild Boar was on the march at the head of 4,000 horse and foot. The Bishop went forth to give him battle on the slopes of the Chartreuse, on the right bank of the river opposite the town. De la Marck, hearing from his spies that the Bishop was coming on in front of his main body, and attended only by a feeble escort, lay in wait for him at a difficult part of the ascent. The surprise was complete, and the escort was cut to pieces. The Bishop, alone in the hands of his enemy, cried out: 'Grâce! Grâce! Seigneur d'Arenberg, je suis votre prisonnier!' But one of de la Marck's followers struck him on the face. De la Marck himself drew his sword, and wounded him in the neck, and, turning to his men, told them to make an end of it. In an instant the Bishop fell from his horse a dead man. They stripped his body, and left it lying in the mud for hours; and it was with difficulty that the clergy obtained permission to bury him with the honours due to his station. [58] [Pg 317]

De la Marck, now master of the situation, called together the clergy of the diocese, and pressed them to choose a new Bishop, suggesting his own son, Jean d'Arenberg, a young man who was not yet a priest, as the most suitable person. Some of the canons, with whom the election lay, left Liége to escape voting. Those who remained were terrified into obedience, and the Wild Boar's son was declared Bishop. De la Marck, at the same time, appointed himself Governor of the Principality.

The murder of the Bishop, and the election of the murderer's son to succeed him, led to new commotions. A meeting of the canons who had fled from Liége, and their brethren who had been coerced into voting, was held at Namur. In that town, out of the Wild Boar's 'sphere of influence,'

having declared the election of Jean d'Arenberg null and void, they proceeded to vote again. On this occasion they were divided into two parties. Some supported Jacques de le Roy, the Count of Chimay's brother, while others were in favour of Jean de Home, a great noble who had been made prisoner at the Chartreuse, but had afterwards escaped.

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There were thus three Bishops-Elect, and another civil war broke out. The Archduke Maximilian^[59] sent an army from Brabant into the Principality, under Philip of Clèves, to avenge the death of Louis de Bourbon. De la Marck laid waste the lands of Jean de Horne, seized Tongres and other towns, and marched, at the head of 16,000 Liégeois and a number of mercenaries, against Philip of Clèves. But his troops were no match for the trained veterans of Brabant. The mercenaries were driven back upon the Liégeois, who broke and ran. This defeat did not quell the spirit of de la Marck; but Louis XI., on whom he relied, died next year, and the Pope declared in favour of Jean de Horne. De la Marck then saw that his wisest course was to make peace, and in June, 1484, a convention was signed at St. Trond, the terms of which show that the Boar of the Ardennes was no mere bandit chief, but an astute diplomatist, and a man of great influence in the Principality. An indemnity of 30,000 livres was to be paid him by the town of Liége, in security for which an assignment was made in his favour of the lands of Franchimont and the Duchy of Bouillon. If he should be attacked by any who felt aggrieved by his recent proceedings, the Bishop was to help him at all costs. Excesses committed by either side were to be pardoned, and those whose property had been damaged were to have no claim for compensation.

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THE RIVER SAMBRE SEEN FROM THE PONT DE SAMBRE, NAMUR



When Jean de Horne, now duly accepted as Bishop, made his state entry into Liége de la Marck rode beside him, and the two soon became inseparable. They usually dined together at the Bishop's table. They gave each other presents. If there was a fête, they attended it in company. They are said to have even slept in the same bed, at that time a favourite sign of friendship among the great. But, though it seemed as if they were bent on setting the people an example of mutual forgiveness and brotherly love, there were some who shook their heads, and hinted that the friendships of great men who have been estranged are seldom sincere.

Next year there was a fête at St. Trond in honour of the Bishop of Liége, at which all the nobles of the Principality, with their wives and daughters, had assembled. De la Marck, of course, was there. Feasting and dancing went on till late in the afternoon, when the Bishop's brothers, Jacques de Horne and Frédéric de Montigny, called for their horses, saying they must start for Louvain. The Bishop proposed to de la Marck that they should ride part of the way in company, and to this he agreed. So the Bishop, his two brothers, and de la Marck rode together till they reached a level plain, where de Montigny challenged de la Marck to race him to a wood which was some distance before them. They started, and left the others behind. De la Marck, who was mounted on a very swift horse, was soon in front, and galloped on till he reached the wood. The moment he drew rein a band of soldiers, who had been lying in ambush, rushed out and surrounded him. Then de Montigny rode up and said: 'You are my prisoner.' De la Marck, who was not armed, asked what he

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meant, on which de Montigny produced an order for his arrest signed by the Archduke Maximilian, and told him they must now go to Maestricht. 'Then,' said de la Marck at once, 'it is to my death.'

They reached Maestricht in the evening, and soon de la Marck was told that he had only a few hours to live. During the night he was visited by the Prior of the Dominicans, from whom, having made confession, he received absolution. Early next morning they brought him to the scaffold in the market-place. A prodigious crowd had gathered round it, and in a window close at hand, openly rejoicing at the scene, was the Bishop of Liége. De la Marck called to him in a loud voice, reproaching him for his treachery, and uttered a solemn warning that the Wild Boar's head, then about to fall, would 'bleed for many a day.' He asked the nearest of the spectators to carry his last farewells to his wife and children. To his brothers and friends he left the work of avenging his death. He took off his cloak himself, and threw it to the crowd. Then, lifting his long beard so that it covered his face, he bent down, and the executioner struck off his head with one blow.

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The Archduke Maximilian had ordered the arrest of de la Marck on the ground that he was engaged in some fresh plot with France; but the conduct of the Bishop and his brothers was loudly condemned even in that age of perfidy. The family of de la Marck swore vengeance, and the Principality of Liége was once more bathed in blood.

Calling to his aid the common people, who had always loved the Wild Boar, and assisted behind the scenes by the King of France, who wished to excite the Liégeois against the Archduke Maximilian, Everard de la Marck, William's brother, made war against Jean de Horne. A sanguinary struggle, in which no mercy was shown on either side, went on for seven years, but at last the Bishop and his friends made up their minds to sue for pardon.

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A conference was agreed to, which took place on a meadow near Haccourt, on the Meuse between Liége and Maestricht. On the appointed day the Bishop-Prince, attended by his nobles, but himself unarmed, met the brother of the man whom he had so treacherously ensnared. Dismounting from his horse, he approached Everard de la Marck, and said: 'I ask you to pardon me for the death of your brother William.'

Everard looked on him coldly, and said nothing, whereupon the Bishop burst into tears, and sobbed: 'Seigneur Everard, pardon me. Pardon me, I implore you by the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ!' Then Everard, weeping also, answered: 'You ask pardon for the death of my brother in the name of God, who died for us all? Well, I pardon you.' So saying, he gave his hand to the Bishop, and they swore to live at peace with each other.

LA GLEIZE, A VILLAGE IN THE ARDENNES



This strange reconciliation, which took place in 1492, was soon confirmed by the marriage of the Bishop's niece to Everard de la Marck's son, and thereafter there were no more feuds between the families of de Horne and Arenberg.

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Three years later, in 1495, the Diet of Worms established the Imperial Chamber, and put an end to the system of private wars.

FOOTNOTES

[58] Bishop Louis de Bourbon was only forty-five at the date of the murder.

[59] The Duchess Marie of Burgundy, who married the Archduke Maximilian of Austria, afterwards Emperor, had died at Bruges in March, 1482; and Maximilian

CHAPTER XXIII

ÉRARD DE LA MARCK—THE PRINCIPALITY IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

JEAN DE HORNE was Bishop of Liége for twenty-three years, during which the diocese was seldom free from party warfare. At the time of his death, in 1506, the family of Arenberg was so strong and popular that the Chapter of St. Lambert chose Érard de la Marck, the Wild Boar's nephew, as Bishop.^[60] He came to the episcopal throne resolved to end the strife of factions and the family feuds which had been the sources of such misery. He forbade his subjects, under pain of banishment, to rake up the old causes of dispute. He declined to hear those who came to him bearing tales against their neighbours. He chose the officers of his Court without enquiring into their political opinions, and let it be seen that, so long as the law was obeyed and public order maintained, no one was to be called in question for anything which might have happened in the past.

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His foreign policy was equally wise. The Principality of Liége lay between two mighty neighbours, and at first the Bishop's aim was to remain neutral in any disputes which might arise between the Emperor and the King of France. But when, on the death of Maximilian, Charles V. and Francis I. were rivals for the imperial crown, he went to the Diet at Frankfort, and supported the claims of Charles. From that time the Principality, though independent of the rest of Belgium, which formed part of the dominions of Charles V., was in as close relations with the German Empire as the electorate of Cologne and other ecclesiastical fiefs.^[61] The bishops, chosen by the Chapter of Liége, and confirmed by the Pope, were invested by the Emperor with the secular power, and belonged to the Westphalian circle of the German confederation.

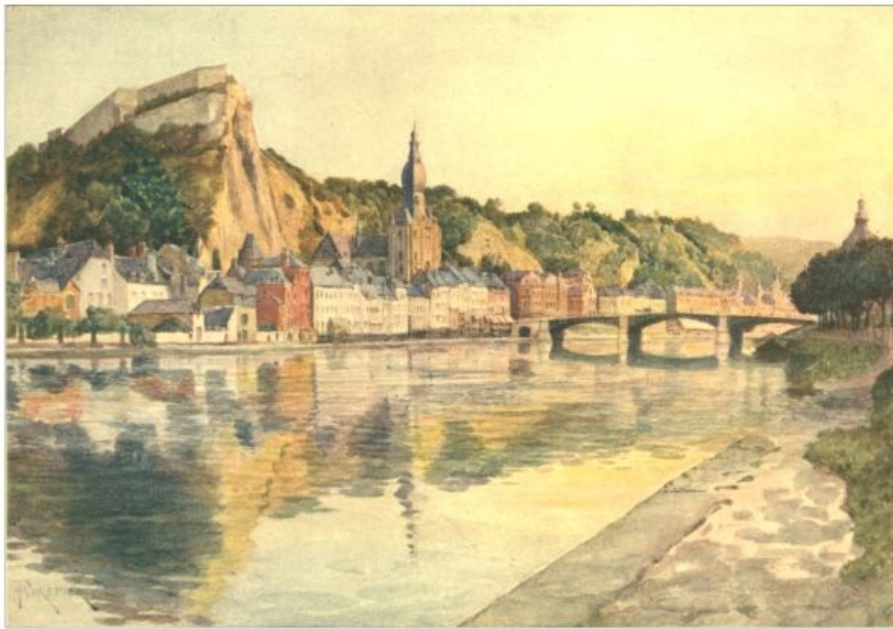
In the strong hands of Bishop Érard the Principality had one of its rare intervals of peace. He found the city of Liége in debt, and the public service disordered by want of money. Many plans for raising funds were laid before him. He examined them all, and then said to his council: 'If you will leave everything to me for four years, I promise to meet all your debts, and put your finances in order without oppressing anyone, and without imposing new taxes.' This offer was accepted, and, so great was his talent for business, in two years Liége was free from all liabilities. During his reign almost every trace of the destruction wrought by Charles the Bold disappeared. The citadel of Dinant was restored. Huy and other places rose from their ashes, and the Bishops' Palace, which stands in the Place St. Lambert at Liége (the *Palais de Justice* of to-day), was built. He died in 1538, having kept the turbulent community of Liége quiet for thirty years.

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When the religious troubles of the sixteenth century first began the reformed doctrines made rapid progress, and the persecutors were busy in Hainaut, Artois, and other Walloon districts in the south-west of Belgium and along the French border. Almost the whole population of Tournai in Hainaut was Calvinist. But the Principality of Liége, governed by the bishop-princes, and independent of Spain, did not suffer like the rest of the Netherlands during the struggle. Nevertheless, before the death of Érard de la Marck the spirit of revolt against the Church of Rome had touched the valley of the Meuse; and, in 1532, Jean Camolet, a Carmelite father, came to Liége empowered by the Pope to conduct an inquisition. The claim of the Holy See to interfere with civil government was known to the people; and the magistrates published a declaration that the judges of the land were the only persons who had the right to deal with offences of any kind committed by the citizens. The Bishop told them that the inquisitor was sent by the Pope only to make enquiry into the beliefs of those who were suspected of heresy, not to interfere with the ordinary courts of law, and that there was no intention of setting up the Spanish Inquisition in the diocese. But the magistrates replied: 'We have our own laws. Our own judges can deal with civil and criminal cases. In matters of religion our own ecclesiastical courts are the only competent tribunals, and we will not permit any infringement of our ancient privileges.' Érard de la Marck, who was far too wise a man to risk the dangers of a revolution, took upon himself the responsibility of enquiry into cases of heresy, and thus saved the Principality from civil war.

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GENERAL VIEW OF DINANT



But, at a later period, when the Netherlands were in revolt from end to end, and William of Orange was engaged in his stupendous contest with Philip II., Gérard de Groisbeck, who was Bishop from 1565 to 1580, found himself in a position of peculiar difficulty. The Principality was at the mercy of both parties. The reformers pillaged the abbeys of Hastière and St. Hubert, and held a great meeting at St. Trond, where the famous battle-cry of 'Vivent les Gueux!' was shouted, and defiance hurled at Philip and at Rome by a tumultuous assemblage under the leadership of Brederode. The Prince of Orange himself, driven out of Brabant, demanded a free passage for his army, and endeavoured to obtain possession of Liège. In this he failed, but a garrison of Spanish troops was sent to occupy the town, and the Bishop had to risk the enmity of Alva by refusing to admit them. At the Pacification of Ghent, in 1576, the Principality of Liège was invited to join the United Provinces of the Netherlands; but the people were, like the Walloons in the other parts of Belgium, intensely Catholic, and the invitation was refused. Bishop de Groisbeck was resolved to maintain the neutrality of his domains. Liège, he announced with consent of the three estates, was to remain a neutral State, and take no part in the quarrels of its neighbours. By this means he hoped to protect it from the ravages of war, and, on the whole, he succeeded, though there was fighting from time to time in the Valley of the Meuse, and the Siege of Maestricht, with all the horrors which followed the capture of that town, took place almost at his own door. His ideas of neutrality, however, may be gathered from the fact that he sent 4,000 miners from his coal-mines to help the besiegers of Maestricht. But the Walloons were, at that time, Catholic beyond any other of the Belgian races, and if the 'cry of agony which was distinctly heard at the distance of a league,' which arose from the heroic defenders as the Spaniards rushed in, could have reached Liège, it probably would not have touched the hearts of many among the Liégeois. At all events, the Bishop's policy was rewarded by a comparatively tranquil reign, disturbed only by a series of petty squabbles with the magistrates of Liège, who claimed the right of holding the keys of the town, a right which the Bishop maintained belonged to him. Gérard de Groisbeck died in 1580. There had often been a question whether it would not be better for the people of Liège if the bishops were chosen without regard to their family connections. Men of high position, it was said, born in palaces, and accustomed from their birth to flattery and the deference paid to social rank, were more likely to be overbearing and ambitious than persons of humbler station. On the other hand, it was argued that a small, turbulent State, surrounded by powerful neighbours, required a ruler who could both secure useful alliances against foreign aggressors, and command the respect and obedience of his own subjects. De Groisbeck had always thought that the Bishop of Liège should be chosen from some royal family; and on his death-bed he recommended as his successor Prince Ernest of Bavaria, grandson of the Emperor Ferdinand.

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When the time came for the election of a new bishop the States-General of the United Netherlands, and the Courts of Spain and France, each brought forward a candidate, but the Chapter of Liège, wishing to remain neutral between these rival interests, decided in favour of Prince Ernest of Bavaria.

A description of his coming to Liège may give some idea of the ceremonies which attended the installation of the bishop-princes. On June 15, the day of his arrival, the magistrates went to meet him on the outskirts of the town, and placed in his hands a copy of the oath which his predecessors had always sworn: that he would maintain all the privileges of the townsmen and their municipal laws, and would never encroach on their liberties, nor allow them to be encroached on by others. The Prince having taken this oath, the keys of the town were presented to him. He returned them to the burgomasters with the words: 'Hitherto you have guarded them faithfully, and I leave them in your hands.' Then the Bishop's horse was led forward to the gate, but as he drew near one of the company of crossbow-men stepped forward and closed it. The attendants shouted, 'Open for the Prince!' but the gate remained closed till a town servant had three times demanded in name of the burgomasters that it should be opened, when this quaint formality came to an end, and the Prince rode under the archway. Within the walls he was met by the guild of crossbow-men, to whom he promised the preservation of all their rights, privileges, and liberties, after which the

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procession marched on, led by a member of the Equestrian Order bearing the sword of state. Next came a band of mounted halberdiers, riding before the governors of the chief towns, who were clothed in mantles of embroidered silk. These were followed by the lords and gentry of the Principality. Philip de Croy, Prince of Chimay, was there at the head of 150 horsemen, together with the Prince of Arenberg, the Duke of Juliers, the Duke of Bavaria, and a long cavalcade of nobles from other parts of Belgium, and from foreign lands, each with a numerous retinue of cavaliers. The Bishop-Prince himself came last, riding between the burgomasters of Liège, and attended by 800 gentlemen-at-arms. A triumphal arch had been erected in the street, on which stood a number of gaily dressed maidens. When the Prince reached it the procession stopped, and from the top of the arch a large wooden pineapple, representing the arms of the town, was lowered into the roadway to the sound of music. It opened, and a beautiful young girl came out, who recited some verses in honour of the day, and presented the Prince with a gilded basket full of jewelled ornaments and silver cups. In the market-place there were three stages. On the first were four boys, representing the ecclesiastical estate, who presented a golden statue as a symbol of the Christian Faith. At the second a sword of honour, decorated with gold and precious stones, was given by the estate of nobles. A golden heart was the offering of the third estate. Close at hand there was a platform, on which a man of the common people knelt before a judge, holding in his hands a scroll, on which were the words, 'Let both sides be heard.'

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At the door of the Cathedral of St. Lambert the leader of the choir laid his hand on the Prince's saddle to signify that, by ancient custom, he claimed the horse and its trappings as the perquisites of his office. When the procession had entered the building the canons welcomed the Bishop in the name of the Chapter, clothed him in a rich cassock, and conducted him to the high altar, where, the Bishop kneeling and the whole assemblage of nobles and Churchmen standing round, the oath sworn by every Bishop of Liège was read aloud.

By this oath he bound himself to maintain unaltered all the rights of the diocese. If he became a cardinal, he must defend these rights before the Holy See at Rome, and, above all, the right of the Chapter to elect the Bishops of Liège. He must not alienate any portion of the Principality without the consent of the Chapter, nor suffer the country to become tributary to any foreign State. His usual place of residence must be within the Principality, and if he had to leave it for a time he must return when his presence was deemed necessary in the interests of the people. He must impose no taxes without the consent of the three estates. He must not abandon any of the national strongholds, and the commanders at such places as the castles of Bouillon, Huy, and Dinant must be natives of the country. No foreigner might hold any office of State; and the Privy Council must be composed of canons and other persons who had taken the oath of fidelity to the Chapter. No alliances must be made, no war declared, and no engagements of any kind entered into with foreign Princes without leave from the Chapter.

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These are only a few of the many obligations which were imposed upon the Princes of Liège. Ernest of Bavaria swore to them all, but it was soon apparent that it was impossible for the Principality to hold aloof from all connection with external politics. By this time the Reformation had triumphed in the greater part of Germany; but the House of Bavaria remained firmly attached to the Catholic Church, and when Gérard Truchses, Archbishop of Cologne, and William de Meurs, Bishop of Münster, abandoned the old faith, the vacant Sees were conferred on Prince Ernest, who thus not only held three bishoprics at the same time, but had to defend his position by force of arms against the Protestant princes. He spent most of his time in Germany, while the Principality of Liège was entered by Spanish and Dutch troops, who behaved with equal harshness to the inhabitants. A small party of Dutchmen surprised the castle of Huy and took it, though without any lives being lost on either side. Prince Ernest complained on the ground that the Principality was neutral, but the Dutch replied, and with perfect truth, that the neutrality of Liège was a mere pretence, as the Bishop was an active partisan on the side of their enemies. He, therefore, asked help from the Spaniards, by whom Huy was stormed and recaptured after a stout resistance. But, on the whole, it appears that, in spite of the strict orthodoxy of the Liégeois, the Catholics were even more unpopular than the Protestants, for the Archduke Albert having complained that the countryfolk showed more animosity against his soldiers than against the Dutch, he was told that people generally hated those most who did them most harm. Prince Ernest himself spoke bitterly of the way in which money was extorted for the support of the Spanish garrisons in the Ardennes.

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THE ROMANESQUE CHURCH, HASTIÈRE



It was not till the Twelve Years' Truce was concluded between the 'Archdukes' Albert and Isabella and the States-General that the Principality was freed from the incursions of foreign troops. This was in 1609. Three years later Ernest of Bavaria died, and was succeeded in the episcopal thrones of Liége and Cologne by his nephew Ferdinand.

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FOOTNOTES

- [60] Érad's father was Robert, Prince of Sedan, Count of Arenberg, la Marck, and Cleves, and brother of William de la Marck, the Boar of Ardennes.
- [61] It may be convenient to remind some readers that Charles V.'s father was Philip, son of Maximilian and the Duchess Marie, daughter of Charles the Bold, and that his mother was Joanna, daughter of Ferdinand of Spain. On the death of Philip he succeeded to the Netherlands, on the death of Ferdinand to Spain, and on the death of Maximilian the Electors of Germany made him Emperor.

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CHAPTER XXIV THE CHIROUX AND THE GRIGNOUX—THE TRAGIC BANQUET OF WARFUSÉE

FERDINAND OF BAVARIA'S reign was one long quarrel with the magistrates of Liége. He soon found that during his uncle's frequent absences in Germany the burgomasters had usurped many powers which had hitherto belonged to the Bishop. They issued their own decrees without his authority, and sometimes cancelled his orders without consulting him. They took upon themselves to appoint officers, to call the citizens to arms, and to send representatives to foreign Courts. Their pretensions, in short, had risen so high as to make it evident that they aimed at nothing less than supreme power.

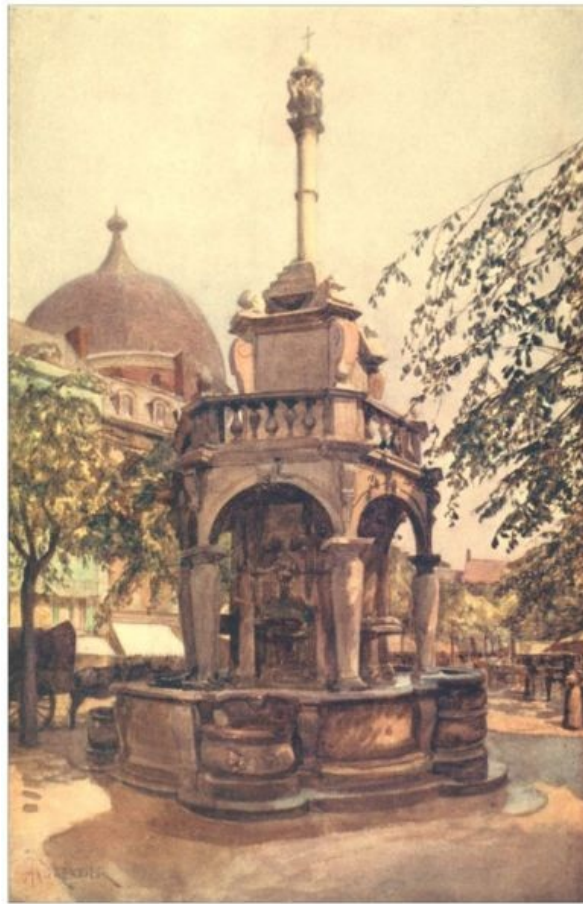
At last a time came when matters were brought to a crisis by the election as burgomasters of two popular candidates, William Beeckmann and Sébastien La Ruelle, whom the people insisted on choosing against the wishes of Ferdinand, who had irritated the Liégeois by bringing German and Spanish troops into the Principality to support his rights. Beeckmann died suddenly. A rumour that he had been poisoned by the Bishop's friends inflamed the passions of the mob, who listened eagerly to La Ruelle when he told them that the intimate relations of their Prince with Austria and Spain were dangerous to the independence of the country.

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There were at this time two factions in Liége—the 'Chiroux' and the 'Grignoux.' It appears that some young men of rank had returned from a visit to Paris dressed in the latest fashion, with white stockings and boots falling over their calves, which made the wits of the town say that they were like a breed of swallows known as 'Chiroux.' One day, at the Church of St. Lambert, some of the populace, seeing a party of these dandies, called out, 'Chiroux! Chiroux!' The others answered back with cries of 'Grignoux'—that is, *Grognards*, or malcontents. Hence the nicknames. The

Chiroux supported the Bishop, while the Grignoux opposed him. The former were, like Ferdinand, for maintaining close relations with Germany, while the latter were supposed to court a friendship with the King of France. At this juncture we come across one of the most curious episodes in the story of Liège.

LE PERRON LIÉGEOIS, LIÈGE



A Baron de Pesche, who lived in the district between the Sambre and the Meuse, having a lawsuit before the judges at Liège, requested one of his kinsmen, the Abbé de Mouzon, a Frenchman, to manage the case. De Mouzon, an acute man with a talent for political intrigue, made full use of his opportunities, and soon knew all about the feud between the Chiroux and the Grignoux, the existence of German and French factions, and everything that was going on in Liège. He informed the Ministers of Louis XIII. that the people of Liège were at heart favourable to France, and that the ties which bound them to Germany could easily be broken, as the Bishop was very seldom in the Principality, and had no real influence with his subjects. He had, he told the French Government, made friends with the most important men in the city, and was in a position to render great services to France, provided he was furnished with proper credentials. The result was that he received a commission as French resident, or envoy, at Liège. He then paid attentions to La Ruelle and his party, for the purpose of persuading them to further the interests of France and break with Germany, and played his part so well that the Chiroux leaders, becoming alarmed, sent a message to the Bishop, advising him to be on his guard against the intrigues of the French envoy and the Grignoux. [Pg 341]

Ferdinand, on receiving this warning, despatched Count Louis of Nassau to Liège with a letter to the magistrates, in which he reprimanded them severely, and accused them of a treasonable correspondence with France. La Ruelle answered in acrimonious terms, declaring that the country was being ruined by German soldiers sent there by the Bishop. To this Ferdinand replied that, as the Liégeois would not do their duty as loyal subjects willingly, he would find means to compel them; and presently an army of Imperial troops marched into the Principality, and encamped near Liège.

And now a new actor comes upon the scene. The Count of Warfusée, who had been employed in turn by Spain and Holland, and betrayed them both, was at this time living in banishment at Liège. Posing as an adherent of the French side, he secured the confidence of La Ruelle and the Abbé de Mouzon, for both of whom he professed a warm friendship; but, in reality, he was in correspondence with the Court at Brussels, and had promised that, if a few soldiers were placed at his disposal, he would crush the French party in Liège.

On April 17, 1637, he gave a dinner-party, to which La Ruelle, Abbé de Mouzon, and other guests were invited. When La Ruelle arrived, accompanied by a young manservant named Jaspar, Warfusée gave him a jovial greeting. Then, noticing Jaspar, he exclaimed, 'Ah! there's my good friend; I know him well,' and showed the way to the kitchen, saying: 'You must enjoy yourself to-day, and drink to the health of Burgomaster La Ruelle.' [Pg 343]

The company sat down to dinner in a room on the ground floor, the windows of which had iron bars across them, and opened on a courtyard in the middle of the building. Count Warfusée sat next the door, with M. Marchand, an advocate, beside him. La Ruelle and the Abbé were on the other side of the table. Baron de Saizan, a Frenchman, and several other gentlemen were present, and also some ladies, among whom were the Baroness de Saizan and Count Warfusée's four daughters. Every one was in the highest spirits. The Count declared he felt so happy that he intended to get drunk, and invited all the rest to follow his example. Calling for big glasses, he challenged de Mouzon to a revel. The Abbé proposed the health of the Most Christian King; and this toast was duly drunk, the gentlemen rising, and uncovering their heads.

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During the first course the merriment of the party increased; but suddenly the Count's manner changed, and one of the company was bantering him about his gravity, when, as the servants were bringing in the second course, his *valet de chambre* came and whispered in his ear. Warfusée nodded, and immediately twenty soldiers, each holding a drawn sword in one hand and a firelock in the other, entered the room, bowed, and surrounded the table. The guests supposed that this was some pleasantry devised for their amusement; and La Ruelle asked his host what it meant. 'Nothing,' answered Warfusée—'do not move;' but as he spoke a band of Spaniards appeared at the windows, and levelled their muskets through the bars. Warfusée, pointing to Jaspar, who was waiting on his master, ordered the soldiers to remove him. He was seized and turned out of the room. The Count then shouted, 'Arrest the burgomaster!'

'What? Arrest me?' exclaimed La Ruelle, rising and throwing his napkin on the table.

'Yes, you,' replied Warfusée, 'and Abbé de Mouzon, and Baron de Saizan also.'

The soldiers took La Ruelle, and dragged him out; and Warfusée, shouting at the top of his voice, declared that he was acting under the orders of the Emperor, and of His Royal Highness the Bishop. They had, he said, borne long enough with the intrigues of the French, and the authority of the Prince must be re-established. A scene of the wildest confusion followed. Warfusée rushed into the courtyard, and loaded La Ruelle with insults. 'Ropes, ropes for the burgomaster!' he shouted. 'Ah! you traitor! your heart is in my hands today. See, here are the orders of the Prince'; and he pulled some papers out of his pocket. 'Make your peace with God, for you must die.' Jaspar, the servant, who was standing near, already bound, is said to have exclaimed, when he heard these words, 'Oh, master, have I not always said what would happen?'

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All in vain La Ruelle begged for mercy. Two Dominicans, sent for to shrive the victim, implored the Count to pause; but 'Kill him, kill him! Make haste. Lose no more time,' was his answer to their entreaties, and to those of his own daughters, who besought him, with tears, to spare the unfortunate man's life. Some of the soldiers refused to touch the burgomaster, and told Warfusée to his face that they were not assassins. But at last three Spaniards drew their daggers, and stabbed La Ruelle repeatedly till he was dead.

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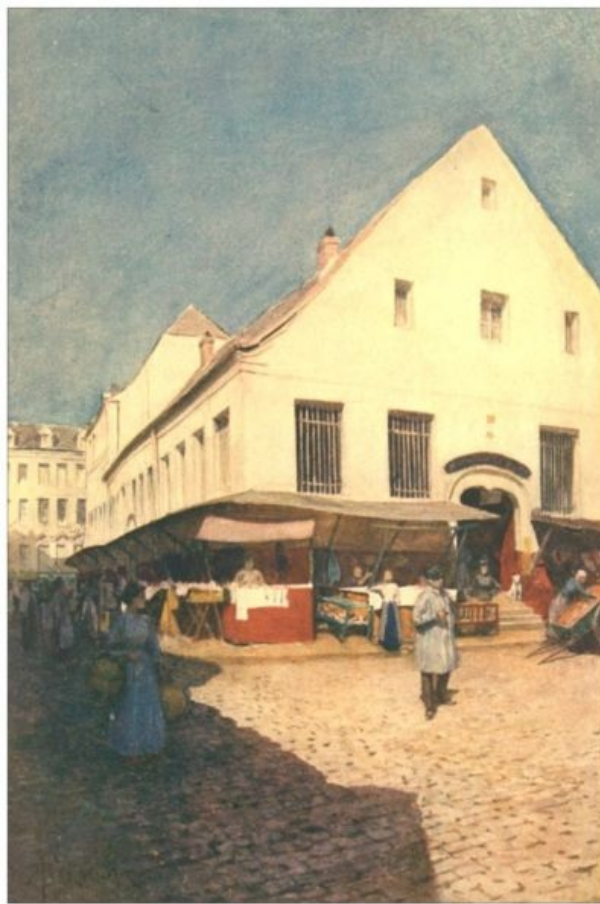
His cries were heard in the room where De Mouzon, fearing that his own last hour had come, was waiting with the other guests under guard of the soldiers. The Dominicans entered; and all were crowding round them, pouring out confessions and clamouring for absolution, when Warfusée came to the door, and told them that the burgomaster was dead, and that he had died repenting of his misdeeds, and seeking forgiveness from God, the Emperor, and the Bishop. Having said this, he went away again.

In the meantime a report had spread through the town that something unusual was happening. It was said that a band of Spanish soldiers had been seen to cross the Meuse, and go to the Count of Warfusée's house, where the burgomaster was known to be dining that day; and every one suspected that they had been sent to arrest La Ruelle, De Mouzon, Warfusée, and their friends. So a cousin of the burgomaster's went to find out if this was the case. When he reached the door of the house he found a crowd of people, who told him they had heard cries from within and the clash of arms, and that there was a rumour that the burgomaster had been murdered.

On hearing this, he knocked at the door, which was opened by the Count, who let him enter with a few of his friends.

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LA VIEILLE BOUCHERIE, LIÈGE



'Tell me, gentlemen,' said Warfusée, 'do you wish to be Spanish, or French, or Dutch?'

'No,' they replied, 'we wish to remain what we are—neutrals and true Liégeois.'

'What would you think,' the Count asked them, 'if you heard that La Ruelle has sold your country to France?'

'We would not believe it,' they all replied.

'Do you know his signature?' Warfusée inquired, showing them some documents.

'These are forgeries,' they told him.

'No matter!' exclaimed the Count; 'I had orders to kill La Ruelle. He is already dead, and I hold Abbé de Mouzon and Baron de Saizan prisoners. Would you like to see La Ruelle's body?'

To this they replied 'No,' and asked permission to leave the house.

By this time the news of the burgomaster's death was known in the town, and a vast crowd had gathered in front of the house, shouting 'To arms!' and demanding admission. The Count ventured to open the door, and allow the burgomaster's cousin and his friends to escape. The noise increased, as the people knocked loudly at the door, and uttered threats of vengeance upon the Count. Warfusée, now trembling in every limb, pale and terror-stricken, ran hither and thither between the courtyard and the garden, and at last hid himself in a room on the upper story, just as an armed crowd of townsmen burst in, and forced their way to where the soldiers were guarding Abbé de Mouzon and the other prisoners. Baron de Saizan at once called on the Spaniards to give up their weapons, and promised them quarter. They allowed themselves to be disarmed; but the townsmen instantly attacked them. There was a short, but desperate, struggle, during which the ladies, cowering on the floor, protected themselves as best they could from the musket-balls which flew about, and the sword-cuts which the infuriated townsmen dealt in all directions. In a few minutes the Spaniards were slain to the last man; and then some of the burghers, moved by pity, led the daughters of Warfusée from the blood-stained house to the Hôtel de Ville, where they obtained shelter.

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Their father at this time was lying on a bed upstairs, where he was soon discovered by La Ruelle's cousin, who had returned, and some of the burghers, who dragged him down to the door of the house and threw him out into the street. The mob rushed upon him, stabbed him, and beat him to death with bludgeons, tore off his clothes, pulled him by the feet to the market-place, hung his head downwards on the gallows, and finally tore the dead body to pieces. A fire was lighted, his remains were burned, and the ashes thrown into the Meuse.

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Even this revenge did not quench the thirst for blood which consumed the people of Liège. The advocate Marchand, who had been one of Warfusée's guests, and another eminent citizen, Théodore Fléron, fell under suspicion, and were slaughtered. It is said that one of those who slew Fléron was so mad with rage that he flung himself on the dead man's corpse, tore it with his teeth like a wild beast, and sucked the blood. The church of the Carmelites, who were also suspected of some guilty knowledge of Warfusée's plot, was sacked. The Rector of the Jesuits was murdered, and the members of that society were driven from the town. The mob went through the streets

shouting, 'Death to the Chiroux! Death to the priests!' A list was drawn up of suspected persons, who were condemned, without trial, on a charge of having conspired against the State; and many of the Chiroux faction were hung on the gallows.

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Such is the horrible story of the 'Tragic Banquet of Warfusée,' as it is called in local history. The motive for the crime, as foolish as it was brutal, was obviously the wish of Warfusée to gain, at any cost, some credit with the Emperor, though there seems to be no proof that either the Emperor or Ferdinand had really authorized the murder of the burgomaster. Nor is there evidence to show that La Ruelle had plotted to hand over the Principality to France. The only explanation of Warfusée's extraordinary folly seems to be that he had entirely misunderstood the sentiments of the Liégeois, and had under-estimated the popularity of La Ruelle and the strength of the Grignoux faction. Otherwise, desperate villain though he was, he would scarcely have ventured to commit such a crime with no support save that of a few soldiers.

THE EPISCOPAL PALACE—INNER COURT, LIÉGE



A semblance of peace followed; but soon the feud between the Chiroux and the Grignoux broke out again. Once more the Grignoux obtained the upper hand. The Episcopal Palace was taken by the mob. Two hundred citizens of the upper class were ordered into banishment; and when the Bishop was on his way to Liège, hoping to restore order by peaceful means, he was met by the news that the gates were closed against him. He therefore sent his nephew, Prince Henry Maximilian of Bavaria, with an army to reduce the town. In a skirmish near Jupille one of the burgomasters was killed. The Grignoux lost heart, and opened the gates. Then came a wholesale arrest of the popular leaders, four of whom were executed. The mode of electing magistrates was altered, the Bishop reserving to himself the right of nominating half of them. The loyalists who had been banished were recalled. To overawe the people, a citadel was built upon the high ridge above the town; and when Ferdinand died, in 1650, the Principality was more at rest than it had been for many years.

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CHAPTER XXV THE GAMING-TABLES AT SPA—THE FRENCH REVOLUTION— ANNEXATION OF THE PRINCIPALITY

ALREADY two Princes of Bavaria had been Bishops of Liège, and now a third succeeded, Prince Maximilian Henry, who filled this uneasy throne from 1650 to 1688.

During most of that time the armies of almost every nation in Europe swept like a flood over the Principality; but the most important transaction of Maximilian's reign was the establishment of a new system for the election of magistrates. This system, which came into force in November, 1684, and was known as the 'Réglement de Maximilien de Bavière,' deprived the lower classes of that direct power of election which they had so long abused, and divided it between the Bishops and the middle class. The result of this measure was that there was quiet, if not harmony, within the walls of Liège for the next hundred years. During that period, from 1684 to 1784, the valley of the Meuse was frequently the seat of war in the various campaigns of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

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More tranquil times came with the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, in 1748, when the Austrian Netherlands were restored to the Empress Maria Theresa. It was, indeed, only a calm between two storms. But for some years the arts of peace flourished in the valley of the Meuse; and side by side with a remarkable progress of industry and commerce the intellectual activity of the people increased. An association, called the 'Société d'Emulation,' was formed, chiefly for the study of French literature; and soon the works of Voltaire, of Diderot, and of d'Alembert were read by all classes. The clergy tried to forbid the purchase of such books, but in vain. Amongst the working class the favourite authors were those who attacked the clergy; and the writings of Voltaire became so popular that secret meetings were held in many of the country villages for the purpose of hearing them read aloud. Thus, beneath the surface, the spirit of inquiry and free thought was fostered. Already in France the first murmurs of the coming storm were heard; and in Liège people began to speak about the 'rights of man,' to question the dogmas of the Church, and to ridicule the priests at whose feet their forefathers had knelt for so many hundred years.

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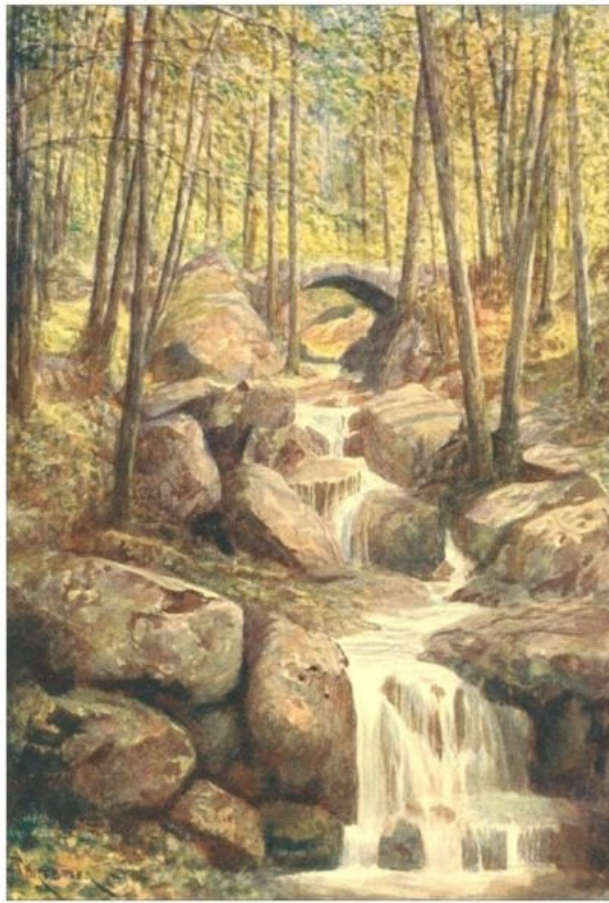
While these new forces were gathering strength, César de Hoensbroeck, one of the Canons of St. Lambert, became Bishop, on July 21, 1784. A trifling dispute with which his reign began was the prelude to very serious events. For many years a company called the 'Société Deleau' had enjoyed a monopoly of the gaming-tables at Spa, under a grant from the Bishops of Liège, to whom a third of the profits were paid. In 1785 one Levoz, a citizen of Liège, opened a new gambling-house, which he called the 'Club.' The Société Deleau protested against this infringement of its monopoly. Levoz and his friends replied that by law the Bishops had no right to grant a monopoly without the sanction of the estates; and at last the case was laid before the Imperial Chamber of the German Empire.

This petty quarrel, so trivial in its origin, had run its course for more than two years, when suddenly it was raised into a grave controversy by one of the partisans of Levoz, Nicolas Bassenge, who published a series of letters in which he declared that the liberties of the country were at stake. 'It is not,' he said, 'a mere question about a game of hazard.' Which is to be supreme, he asked, the Prince or the people? Who has the right to make laws or grant monopolies? The chief of the State is not its master, but merely the instrument of the national will. Others followed Bassenge in the same strain; and more letters, fresh recriminations, hot words and angry answers, added fuel to the fire.

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Levoz, tired of waiting for a decision from the Imperial Chamber, leased his Club to a manager, Paul Redouté, who opened it with dancing added to the attractions of dice and cards. The Bishop sent 200 soldiers to Spa, who closed the Club tables, and forbade all gaming except in the rooms to which he had granted the monopoly. A warrant was issued for the arrest of Redouté and M. Ransonnet, who had fought in the American War of Independence, and was now a leader among the disaffected party in Liège. The latter fled to Brussels, where the Brabant revolution against Joseph II. was approaching its climax, and sent letters to Liège, in which he said that a plan was on foot to establish a republic consisting of Brabant and the Principality of Liège. Would it not, he asked, be a glorious work to confine the Bishops to their Apostolic mission, as in the days of St. Hubert? Words like these made a deep impression at a time when the old influences of tradition and custom were beginning to lose their force.

PONT DU PROPHÈTE, PROMENADE MEYERBEER, SPA WOODS



In the spring and summer of 1789 there was much suffering among the poor, owing to a bad season; and the Bishop arranged to celebrate July 21, the anniversary of his election, by a distribution of bread among the destitute. But before July 21 came, horsemen had galloped up the Valley of the Meuse with tidings of the wonderful things which had been done in France. 'Workers of iniquity,' Bassenge wrote, 'behold Paris, and tremble!'

The Bastille had fallen on July 14, and a month later almost to a day, on August 16, the revolution in Liège began. For two days the people did nothing but march about the streets; but very early on the morning of Tuesday the 18th the tocsin was sounding over the town, and soon the market-place was filled by an immense crowd, all wearing cockades of red and yellow, the national colours. Baron de Chestret marched at the head of 200 armed men into the Hôtel de Ville, and expelled the burgomasters. This was followed by the election, at the famous Perron, of new burgomasters, one of them being Baron de Chestret, who, later in the day, went with a number of the insurgents to the Bishop's palace at Seraing, and demanded his presence in the city, and his written approval of what had been done. The Bishop, adorned with a red and yellow cockade, was hurried to Liège by the mob, who crowded round his carriage, shouting, blowing trumpets, and beating drums. The horses were taken out, and the rioters drew him to the Hôtel de Ville, and brought him into a room where the light of a single candle showed a number of men waiting for him sword in hand. A threatening voice came from the darkness, saying, 'The nation demands your signature. Make haste!' and the Bishop forthwith signed a number of documents which were placed before him, without waiting to read the contents. On the morrow he returned to Seraing; but a few days later he departed secretly for Trèves.

For nearly two years the Imperial Chamber was occupied with the question of Liège; but at last, when the revolution in Brabant had been suppressed, an Austrian army entered the Principality. Everything which the revolutionary party had done since August 18, 1789, was declared null and void. The burgomasters who had been expelled were restored to office. Those Canons of St. Lambert who had fled were brought back, and the Bishop himself returned. The Société d'Emulation, which had done so much to encourage the study of Voltaire, was suppressed. Sentences of banishment, and even of death, were pronounced against some of those who had led the revolt; and there can be little doubt that Bishop Hoensbroeck earned the title of 'prêtre sanguinaire,' which was given him at the Courts of Berlin and Vienna. He died in June, 1792; and in August of that year his nephew, the Comte de Méan, was elected by the Chapter. But before the new Bishop's inauguration the army of the French Republic, fresh from its victory at Jemappes, having driven the Austrians beyond the Meuse, took possession of Liège. This was on November 28, 1792.

Dumouriez, who had entered Brussels without opposition, received a hearty welcome at Liège, where the popular sentiment was in favour of an union with France; and in every part of the Principality resolutions were passed for incorporating the country with the Republic. It is said that, shortly before August 18, 1789, Mirabeau dined at Liège with Bassenge and some of the revolutionary leaders, when the conversation turned on the affair of Spa. The constitution of Liège was explained to him. 'And you are not contented with that?' he said. 'Gentlemen, let me tell you that if in France we had enjoyed half your privileges, we would have thought ourselves happy.' But

there had always been a charm in the word 'Republic' for the people of Liège. 'Men of Liège,' said Nicolas Bassenge, when the National Convention at Paris decreed the annexation of the Netherlands, 'our lot is fixed: we are French. To live or die Frenchmen is the wish of our hearts, and no wish was ever so pure, so earnest, or so unanimous.'

Thomas Bassenge, brother of Nicolas, was at this time a member of the Municipal Council of Liège; and in February, 1793, he persuaded the magistrates to celebrate the revolution by destroying the Cathedral of St. Lambert, which stood near the Episcopal Palace of Érad de la Marck. The front of this church, the finest ecclesiastical building in the Principality, was a mass of elaborate carving. Statues of angels and archangels, of patriarchs and prophets, of martyrs and of saints, rose one above the other, and over them innumerable pinnacles were interlaced by a maze of slender arches, crossing each other with tracery so delicate as almost to resemble lace. Beneath this profusion of stone work the great doorway was adorned with marble statues of the benefactors of the church from the chisel of Lambert Zoutman, a sculptor of Liège; and in the interior of the building, with its marble columns and windows of old stained glass, were many paintings, the tombs of the Bishops, rich tapestries, a jewelled bust of Lambert, and many objects of value, amongst which were two golden statues sent by Charles the Bold to the shrine of the patron saint, as an act of expiation after he had destroyed the town. This building, which had survived the great disaster of the fifteenth century, was now completely wrecked. The statues and the monuments were cast down. The mausoleum of Érad de la Marck was sold and broken up. The graves were opened, the bones thrown out, and the lead of the coffins used for bullets. The clocks were sent up the Meuse in barges to France, and there turned into copper money. Everything valuable was removed, and soon nothing remained but the bare walls, which in a few years crumbled into ruins. Thus the long line of the Bishop-Princes of Liège, and the place in which for centuries they had been inaugurated, fell together.

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CHAPTER XXVI

LIÉGE AND THE VALLEY OF THE MEUSE IN MODERN TIMES— BOUILLON

THE territory which the Bishops had governed was now merged in four of the nine departments into which the National Convention divided the annexed Austrian Netherlands. The department of 'Forêts,' with Luxembourg for its capital, included the Ardennes. The western portion of the old diocese was sunk in 'Sambre et Meuse,' of which Namur was the chief town. 'Ourthe' was the name given to the district in which Liège was situated. To the east lay the department of 'Meuse Inférieure,' with Maestricht for its capital. Thus the old boundaries of the Principality were entirely obliterated. The Convention conferred the rights of French citizens on the people of these districts, and commissioners were sent from Paris to divide the country into cantons, and establish a new system of local administration on the French model.

The departments of Forêts, Sambre et Meuse, Ourthe, and Meuse Inférieure were in the same condition as the rest of Belgium during the closing years of the eighteenth century and down to the fall of Napoleon. After that they formed part of the 'Kingdom of the Netherlands,' under the House of Orange-Nassau, and were called the provinces of Luxembourg, Namur, Liège, and Limbourg.

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When the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the chief constructive work accomplished by the Congress of Vienna, fell to pieces in 1830, the Liégeois went with the rest of Belgium in the revolution against William I. As soon as they heard of the insurrection at Brussels, the townsmen of Liège met, as of old, in the market-place, put on the national colours, and helped themselves to weapons from the armourers' shops. A company of 300 volunteers, with two pieces of cannon, marched across Brabant into Brussels, and took a prominent part in the street fighting, which ended in the retreat of the Dutch troops, and the triumph of the revolution which led to the separation of the Catholic Netherlands from Holland, and the election of Leopold I. as King of Belgium.

PONT DE JAMBES ET CITADELLE, NAMUR



Long ago, in the days of Prince Maximilian of Bavaria, a fortress was built on the only bridge which at that time crossed the Meuse at Liège. This fortress, armed with cannon which could sweep both sides of the river, left only one narrow waterway, nicknamed 'The Dardanelles,' by which boats could pass up and down the stream. It has long since disappeared, and the present Pont des Arches now occupies the sight of the old bridge. The irregular outline of the houses on the bank of the Meuse, with their fronts of grey, white, and red, the church towers appearing over the roofs of the town behind, and the ridge of the citadel rising high in the background, are best seen from the Pont des Arches, from which the modern Rue Leopold leads straight into the very heart of Liège, to the place on which the Cathedral of St. Lambert stood. It is just a century since the last stones of the old church were carted away; and now the Place St. Lambert, like the Place Verte, which opens on it from the west, and the market-place, which is a few yards to the east, has a bright look of business and prosperity, with its shops and cafés.

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The Episcopal Palace, now the Palais de Justice, the erection of which took thirty years during the commencement of the sixteenth century, has undergone many alterations since the days of Érarde de la Marck. Two hundred years after it was finished a fire destroyed the original front, which had to be rebuilt, and the rest of the vast structure was restored in the nineteenth century. The primitive façade has been replaced by one moulded on severely classic lines; but the inner squares, with their picturesque cloisters, are strangely rich in types of every style, a medley of Gothic, Renaissance, Moorish, as if symbolic of the vicissitudes undergone by the Bishop-Princes who inhabited this immense building. Most of the grotesque carvings, the demons in stone, and the fantastic figures which surround these courts, were conceived by the luxuriant imagination of Francis Borset, a sculptor of Liège.

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Close to the Episcopal Palace is the market-place, where so many of the scenes described in these pages took place, and where now stands the modern Perron, designed by Delcour at the end of the seventeenth century to replace the old column, at the foot of which the laws of the Principality, peace, or war used to be proclaimed. There is nothing about it to recall the history of the stormy times when Charles the Bold carried it off into Flanders; but the tradition of the ancient Perron still survives.

At Brussels, Ghent, Bruges, Louvain, the Hôtels de Ville retain their aspect of the Middle Ages, when they were the centres of that passionate civic life which throbs through all the history of the Netherlands. But the Hôtel de Ville of Liège is modern, of the eighteenth century. It would make a commodious private mansion, but has nothing in common with the architectural gems which adorn the great cities of Flanders and Brabant.

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This lack of architectural distinction is characteristic of modern Liège. The hammers of the French Revolution, in destroying the Cathedral of St. Lambert, completed what the fires of Charles the Bold began, and of the really old Liège almost nothing remains. But the fiery spirit which once led to so many wars and revolutions now finds an outlet in useful work. The industrious character of the Walloons is perhaps most highly developed in other Walloon parts of Belgium—among the carpet factories of Tournai, the iron-works of Charleroi, the flax-works of Courtrai, and in the coal-mines of the Borinage, which blacken the landscape for miles round Mons. But the people of Liège have always been famous for their skill in working steel and iron. In the old days they forged the weapons of war which they used so often; and at the present time there are in the town many flourishing companies who turn out large quantities of guns, engines, and machinery, while up the Meuse there are coal-mines, furnaces, and factories, where the Walloons toil as laboriously as in Hainaut.

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In the year after Waterloo William I. and John Cockerill, an Englishman, established iron-works at

Seraing, within a few miles of Liège. In 1830, when the Kingdom of the Netherlands was broken up, Cockerill became owner of the business, which has grown since then, until it is now one of the largest iron manufactories in Europe, with some twelve thousand workmen constantly employed in its coal-mines and engine-works. The Palace at Seraing, from which Bishop Hoensbroeck was carried by the revolutionary mob to the Hôtel de Ville at Liège in the summer of 1789, is now the office of the well-known firm of John Cockerill and Company.

CHÂTEAU DE BOUILLON, IN THE SEMOIS VALLEY



Beyond Seraing the Valley of the Meuse winds up through the centre of what was once the Principality of Liège, and at every turn there is something which recalls the olden time. The white Château of Aigremont, where the Wild Boar of Ardennes used to live, stands boldly on its hilltop on the left bank of the river. A little farther, and we come to the Condroz country, with its capital Ciney, notorious for the insane 'War of the Cow,' and Huy, with the grave of Peter the Hermit, and its long history of suffering. The whole valley is so peaceful now, full of quiet villages, gardens, hay-fields, and well-cultivated land, that it is difficult to realize that for centuries it was nothing but a battlefield, and that in these regions the people suffered almost as much from the depredations of their friends as from the enemy, even long after the barbarism of the Burgundian period was a thing of the past. 'We have,' says Field-Marshal de Merode, during the campaigns of Louis XIV., 'eighteen miserable regiments of infantry, and fourteen of cavalry and dragoons, who are just six thousand beggars or thieves, for they have neither money nor clothing, and live by plunder on the highways, stopping public and private coaches, robbing travellers, or, pistol in hand, demanding at least a *pour boire*. Nobody can go from one place to another without meeting them, which ruins business and the whole country.'

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The situation of Namur, at the junction of the Sambre and the Meuse, made it a place of great importance in every war, not only in the Middle Ages, but also in later times. When the Grand Alliance was formed against France, it was in Brabant that the main body of the Allies gathered; but before long the tide of war rolled into the Valley of the Meuse. Liège was bombarded for five days by Marshal Boufflers, and the Bishop, from his place of refuge in the citadel, saw the Hôtel de Ville and half the town set on fire by the shells which flew over the river from the French batteries on the Chartreuse. As the struggle went on, Huy was destroyed by Marshal Villeroi, Namur fell into the hands of Louis XIV., and farther afield it seemed as if no city, however strong, could stand a siege against the genius of Vauban, while the victories at Steinkirk and Landen made the arms of France appear invincible. But at last, in 1695, came the siege and capture of Namur by William III. The taking of Namur was the turning-point of that war, and led to the Treaty of Ryswick, by which Spain recovered Luxembourg, and all the conquests which the King of France had made in the Netherlands.

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Again, when the War of the Spanish Succession began, the English army, on its way to Germany, marched into the Principality of Liège, took the town and citadel of Liège, drove the French over the Meuse, and carried the war to Blenheim on the Danube. But though the first of Marlborough's chief victories was thus gained in Bavaria, the second of his four great battles was fought to obtain command of the way to Namur. Marshal Villeroi's object in giving battle at Ramillies was to protect that town, which he regarded as the key to the Valley of the Meuse; but fortune had deserted France, and the combat of May 23, 1706, decided the fate not only of the Principality of Liège, but of all Belgium, though the war continued through the carnage of Oudenarde and Malplaquet, till the Peace of Utrecht.

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Even now the shadow of a possible war overhangs this part of Europe; and if those who think that, sooner or later, the neutrality of Belgium will be violated are right, it is very likely that the line of the Meuse, with its navigable stream, its railway, and its roads, so well adapted for military purposes, will be used. It is in view of this danger that the fortifications along the valley are maintained. Within a radius of six miles round Liège there are twelve forts. The citadel of Huy,

planned by William I. soon after the campaign of Waterloo, was enlarged and made stronger so lately as 1892. Namur is surrounded by nine forts at a distance of about six miles from the town; and the citadel of Dinant forms an outpost to the south-west.

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The last occasion on which any part of Belgium, so long the 'Cockpit of Europe,' had a glimpse of war was in the autumn of 1870. The battle of Sedan had been fought within a few miles from the southern slopes of the Ardennes, and during September 3 thousands of wounded men and prisoners from the beaten army were crowded in Bouillon, a little town which lies in the gorge of the Semois, just over the Belgian frontier.

This place was once the capital of a Duchy. On a lofty rock, almost surrounded by the dark, brown waters of the many-winding Semois, stands the ruined castle of the Dukes of Bouillon, a large pile of grey walls and towers, which gives some idea of the immense strength of the fortresses which, even in the remote forest-land of Ardennes, the feudal lords built for themselves. The age of this stronghold is unknown, but there seems reason to believe that a fort was erected on this rock by the Princes of Ardennes so early as the seventh century. In the eleventh century it was ceded to the Principality of Liége by the famous Crusader Godfrey of Bouillon; but this part of the Ardennes, on the borders of France and Luxembourg, was a kind of 'Debatable Land,' and there were frequent struggles for the Duchy between the Bishops of Liége and the family of de la Marck. The Wild Boar of Ardennes obtained possession of it, and his son usurped the title of Duke of Bouillon; but one of his descendants having incurred the wrath of Charles V., the castle was taken, the town sacked, and the Duchy restored to the Bishops of Liége. They retained it till it fell into the hands of Louis XIV., by whom it was given to the family of La Tour d'Auvergne, the representatives of the de la Marcks. It became a small Republic after the French Revolution, but was included in the Kingdom of the Netherlands from 1815 to 1830. Since then it has formed part of Belgian Luxembourg.

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Bouillon, with its mountains and woods, and its romantic ruin, being one of the loveliest spots in the Ardennes, soon became a favourite place for holiday-makers, and had for many years a peaceful existence before the storm burst so near it in that eventful year 1870. 'I was there,' M. Camille Lemonnier says, 'in the midst of the *débâcle*, and, sick at heart, and in the horror of those days, wrote these words: "A furious coming and going filled the streets. We found the *Place* crowded with townspeople, peasants, lancers, prisoners, and wounded men struggling among the horses' hoofs, the wheels of wagons, and the feet of the stretcher-bearers. A horrible noise rose in the darkness of the evening from this tumultuous crowd, who moved aimlessly about, with staring eyes, lost in agony, and scarcely knowing what they did. A stupor seemed to weigh on every brain; and all round, looking down on the seething mass, lights twinkled in the windows of the houses. Behind the white blinds of one house, the Hôtel de la Poste, at the corner to the left of the bridge, a restless shadow moved about all night long. It was the shadow of the last Bonaparte, watching, and a prisoner, while near him the frantic cries wrung by defeat from the wreckage of the French army died away in sobs and spasms."

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Next morning Napoleon III., who had spent the night in the Hôtel de la Poste, left with a guard of Prussian officers, climbed up the road, through the woods which lie between the valleys of the Semois and the Lesse, to Libramont, whence he journeyed by train to Wilhelmshoe.

Since then Bouillon has returned to the quiet times which preceded the Franco-German War; but that student of history must have a very dull imagination who does not find much to think of in this narrow valley, on the frontiers of Belgium and France, where the past and the present meet, the day when Duke Godfrey rode off to plant his standard on the walls of Jerusalem, and the day when his castle looked down on the humiliation of the ruler who began his reign by making war about the Holy Places of Palestine.

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