HOLLAND AND BELGIUM

THEIR COMMON HISTORY AND THEIR RELATIONS

THREE LECTURES GIVEN AT
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON, ON
FEBRUARY 10, 17 AND 24, 1920, BY

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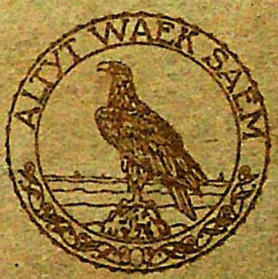

W. SIJTHOFF'S UITGEVERSMAATSCHAPPIJ
LEIDEN

PERPUSTAKAAN NASIONAL
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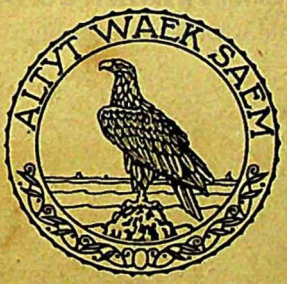

A. W. SIJTHOFF'S UITGEVERSMAATSCHAPPIJ
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R. H. S.

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I.

For the present generation of Europeans Holland and Belgium are two entirely different entities. The remembrance of their one-time relationship has grown dim. Yet this relationship some centuries ago was so intimate that all the different regions comprised in the two Kingdoms of to-day were known under one and the same collective appellation : the Low Countries, the Netherlands. In the middle of the 16th century it looked as if the whole of this area, the Netherlands, which so far had in a political sense hung rather loosely together, was destined to grow into one of those closely-knit, unitarian monarchies which were then forming all over Europe. The famous rebellion against Spain split the Netherlands in two. During the period when most modern nations became conscious of themselves, there gaped a wide chasm between North and South in the Netherlands, and the Republic of the United Provinces had very little in common with the Spanish, later the Austrian, Netherlands. Yet so strong was the old tradition of Netherlands unity that the Congress of Vienna in 1815 could think of creating a Kingdom of the Netherlands which was composed of both Holland and Belgium. But the tradition of unity was no longer strong where for the success of that creation it ought to have been so in the very first place : I mean amongst the p e o p l e of the Netherlands, both North and South, themselves. So Belgium seceded already in 1830 and became an independent Kingdom. And there, many people would say, is an end of the story. In a sense very likely there is. But if there does not seem to be any further possibility of political union between the Northern and Southern Netherlands, a r a p p r o c h e m e n t on the basis of a common civilisation is not only possible, it is a certainty, it has been a fact of growing importance for the last forty or fifty years. When

Belgium seceded from Holland in 1830, a factor which during the 19th century was everywhere in Europe to gain in importance, had hardly come into play yet : I mean the community of language. The mass of the people in Northern Belgium always spoke Flemish, or Dutch, but since the 18th century and up to a comparatively recent time they had no pride of language, they suffered French to usurp the position of their own language as the medium of all higher civilisation in Flemish Belgium. All that is changed now, and as the position of Flemish in Belgium becomes stronger, a union of a different kind than that which formerly was planned by princes and statesmen cannot but grow between Holland and Belgium.

You will see, therefore, that it is possible to trace the idea of Netherlands unity right through the history of the two countries, and that is what in these lectures I propose to do. It is a thing which is seldom done either by Dutch or by Belgian historians. On the contrary, they mostly look at what divides, not at what unites the North and the South, they are not concerned with the idea of unity, which according to the mhas come to nought, but with the origins of the separate nationalities of Belgian and Dutch, of which they are much more acutely aware. You know that historians are generally inclined to be fatalists. Seeley puts it in his "Expansion of England" that they are "liable to a curious kind of optimistic fatalism" which, for instance, in this country made them "feel bound to make out that the loss of our American colonies was not only inevitable, but was even a fortunate thing for us." Exactly in the same way both Dutch and Belgian historians have generally felt bound to explain how inevitable and how fortunate for their respective peoples was the Netherlands split of the 16th century, and again the secession of Belgium from Holland in 1830. Even when they do not go so far as that, they still limit their view to their own particular country and deal with the other only when it simply cannot be helped. Professor Blok, for instance, the author of the greatest modern Dutch history, says explicitly in his preface that he must deal with the Southern Netherlands in the Mediaeval period, but that afterwards his story will be restricted to the North, which, one must, he says, accept facts, has become an independent State and a separate nationality. Professor Pirenne,

the author of that splendid book, L'Histoire de Belgique (which was unfortunately interrupted by the outbreak of the war) sets out to prove — his book really is a book à thèse — that Belgian nationality, embracing Walloons and Flemings, but excluding the Dutch, is a reality, and that it has been long beforehand prepared in history. He is therefore inclined to emphasise all facts proving intimate relations between Flanders and Brabant and their Southern neighbours, while he is inclined to lay little stress on facts which prove their intimacy with their Northern neighbours.

Some of you may have read in the current number of „History" the very able article of Professor Terlinden of Louvain on the history of the Scheldt. There you have a rather extreme instance of this attitude. Professor Terlinden, like many Belgians at this moment, is not only very acutely aware of his separate nationality, but he feels unfortunately rather sore with regard to Holland. It is interesting to watch him projecting that mood through the centuries backwards, until the histories of his country and mine appear as one prolonged duel. He sees Belgians and Dutch struggling for the mouths of the great rivers before there were either Belgians or Dutch. The dividing line between the two nations which only came into existence, and very suddenly, at the end of the 16th century is to his vivid imagination visible already in the days of Julius Caesar.

I shall not myself say much about those very early times. The present political frontiers of both Holland and Belgium had then no meaning whatever. The B e l g a e, a Celtic tribe lived in the present province of Flanders, that is in the West of Belgium, but in the East, on the river Maas, where there is now a Walloon population, Germanic tribes had settled. And indeed, Celts and Teutons alike, when caught within the Roman Empire, were very speedily romanised, and there again no boundaries were drawn which remain to the present day. The frontier of the Roman Empire was not very stable in these regions, but roughly one can say that it followed the Rhine, which is to say that half of the present Kingdom of Holland was included in it. All living traces of that state of things were swept away by the great Teutonic invasion of the beginning of the fifth century. The people who gave the moribund Roman Empire the death-blow were, as you know, called the Franks.

And now, all of a sudden, we see the beginnings of conditions which survive at the present day. A boundary-line is traced which is still a living reality. It is not (nor has it ever been) a political frontier, but it is a dividing line between races. The Franks found a large area South of the Rhine-frontier which they had overthrown almost emptied of inhabitants. That was due to the continual raids of Germanic tribes, against which the weakening Empire since long had been unable to afford protection. The Franks now setted down upon this thinly populated country (the South of Holland and the North of Belgium) and down to a certain line filled it completely up. The larger part of that line can still be very easily and accurately traced. It is no other than the line which at this very moment divides the French from the Flemish language in Belgium. Straight across Belgium it runs, from East to West, starting to the South of Maastricht, passing a good way South of Brussels and reaching the French frontier in the neighbourhood of Armentières.

In the course of sixteen centuries it has hardly moved. Only here and there do we find some villages which have changed their language. French has gained more than Flemish, and as far as I have been able to make out, most of the French gains were made in the 17th en 18th centuries. Anyhow, the constancy of this boundary line is very remarkable. You must keep in mind that it has never been a political dividing line and that it is not reinforced by a natural frontier either, it just runs through flat country. This, to be sure, was not the case originally. The Franks were stopped in their first onrush by two very palpable obstacles. One was the fortified Roman road from Maastricht to Boulogne ; the other the extensive and still impenetrable forests which covered the South of the present Belgium. Before long, however, these obstacles disappeared, but the two races and the two languages remained touching, yet not penetrating, each other all along the imaginary line which once had been conditioned by them. I must add, that in France the language boundary has not been so immovable as it is in Belgium. I allude to that wide stretch of French country which originally belonged to the Netherlands, and was annexed to France by Louis XIV. In that region Flemish has lost a good deal of ground. It used to reach South as far as Boulogne, but to-day it is

only spoken by some 200.000 people in the extreme North West corner of France, in the Département du Nord.

The Franks, then, at first conquered and colonised. Then, as you know, they went on conquering, they conquered the whole of Gaul, but colonised no longer. Gaul was far too thickly populated. Besides, the man-power of the people of the Franks must have been very nearly exhausted when they had once covered the fields of Flanders and Brabant with farm-steads and hamlets. In Gaul proper the Franks were never anything else but a small minority, a military and land-owning aristocracy superimposed upon the people, an ascendancy class. An ascendancy class, though, which was decidedly inferior to the subjected race in civilisation, and which therefore underwent its influence very deeply. The most potent force of the old Roman civilisation as the Franks found it in Gaul was Christianity and the Frankish monarchy, was christianized very soon. It then turned North again and propagated the Romanism, which it had itself assumed so recently, amongst the Franks who did not live surrounded by Gauls and their old civilisation, and who therefore still retained their pagan beliefs. The old episcopal organisation of the Roman Empire had completely gone under in the country where the invaders from beyond the Rhine had settled, and what is now Flanders and Brabant had to be christianised again. At first the episcopal sees under whose obedience the country of the Franks was brought were all situated in old Gallic, in Romance, regions: Térouanne, Cambrai, Tournai, Liège. But the Church in close alliance with the conquering Gallo-Franks now advanced over the Rhine, where Frisians and Saxons were thrown back and ultimately also subjected and christianised.

Nor did the Frankish Monarchy stop here. It continued expanding, until under Charlemagne it included not only France and the Netherlands but the larger part of Germany as well, not to speak of Austria and Northern Italy. You know also that under Charlemagne's successors several partitions were carried out. The first of those partitions was that of Verdun, in 843. It divided the Carolingian Empire into three parts. The Eastern part was composed of the German and Austrian regions, and the Western of the larger part of present day France. But the two were separated by a long and narrrow area, stretching from Rome Northward to the Northsea, and including

Northern Italy, the Rhônecountry, Switzerland, Alsace and Lorraine, Luxemburg, Belgium except Flanders (which remained with France) and the whole of the present Holland. That curious formation was short-lived, but its influence on history has been enormous. Much of the country which it included was ever since regarded as doubtful territory, to be disputed between the two mighty nations which rose out of the ruins of the Carolingian Empire, France and Germany. This is true especially of the Northern part, the country, roughly, North of Switzerland, which for some time had an independent existence and was called after its rulers (Lotharius) Lotharingia. Lotharingia at first was conquered by Germany, and for some time was one of the duchies which composed the young German Empire. It had, however, less cohesion than most of the other German duchies and the disintegration of feudalism set in there sooner than elsewhere. Lotharingia, henceforward, was no more than a name. The only reality were the feudal States which sprang up everywhere. The lords of Brabant and those of Limburg still claimed to be descendants of the old Dukes and still carried the ducal title. Other feudal formations were the Counties of Hainaut and Guelders (which later on also acquired the ducal rank). In the North, at first vaguely known as Frisia, and over which the Dukes of Lotharingia had never held sway, the most important formations were Holland and Zeeland, united almost from the beginning, and the temporal States of the Bishop of Utrecht, which were soon to get under the powerful influence of the Counts of Holland.

Flanders, as I already observed, belonged to the Kingdom of France, while all the rest of the Netherlands owed allegiance to the Empire. It should be noted that the frontier of the 843 partition, which had become the frontier between France and Germany since the latter had annexed Lotharingia, was drown without any regard whatever to race or language. Flanders, which went to France, was, of course, for the most part Flemish of tongue, while Hainaut, Namur, Liège, which al came under the Empire, were French-speaking. In the long run also, this frontier was destined to be obliterated. The forces that made for Netherlands unity were too strong for it. But at the start, at any rate, we see that there is a division in the Netherlands regions. If they were to come together in

a union, the first condition was that Flanders must be severed from France and all the other States from the Empire. Now this, as a matter of fact, happened soon enough. The power of the Empire was the first to decline. In the 13th century already its authority in the outlying regions on the Northsea had become largely illusory. Brabant, Guelders, Holland were virtually independent. In the same period France, on the contrary, where the royal power was on the increase, was making a determined attempt to fasten her hold on Flanders. She even began to interfere in the old Lotharingia. French influence helped those States to complete their independence from the Empire. Flanders herself then saved the whole of the Netherlands from falling out of German into French vasselage by the heroic opposition which she offered to French encroachments. I need only mention the battle of the Golden Spurs in 1302 and the name of Jacob van Artevelde to recall the memory of a great popular movement. We have here the first instance of powerful national sentiment working in the Netherlands. Of course it was still regional nationalism, but it is curious to note how strongly it was tinged by Germanic race feeling. The Flemings, intimate as their connection with French-speaking regions was and great as was their indebtedness to French culture, were yet determined not to let themselves be absorbed by France. The violent recoil of their struggle with the Southern Power could not help having the effect of throwing them closer together with the other Germanic regions of the Netherlands. No wonder that when in the 14th century the great war began between England and France Edward III found in the Netherlands — Holland, Brabant and Flanders — a firm p o i n t d'a p p u i against France. French power was now weakened to such an extent that it was some centuries before the Netherlands were again seriously threatened from the South. The County of Holland had at that time already been drawn more definitely into the political sphereof the Southern Netherlands by the dynastic union with French-speaking Hainaut. A network of dynastic connections began to spread over the Netherlands. Holland had great influence over Utrecht and ambitions in the direction of Friesland. Brabant, the centre of the Netherlands, hinterland of Holland as well as of Flanders, secured the Eastern appraches to the Netherlands by its union with Limburg.

We can now easily see that some sort of political unity is

being prepared in this group of feudal States. Thrown together as they are by their situation between the two most powerful nations of the Continent, they only waited, as it were, for the dynasty strong enough to unite them and to assert their independence both towards the South and towards the East. This dynasty was as you know to come from outside the Netherlands, and curiously enough, it came from France, which in itself was again a very important factor in the ultimate formation of Netherlands, of both Dutch and Belgian, nationality. But before I speak of the unification of the Netherlands under the Burgundian Dukes I want to dwell for a moment on the factors which had made them ripe for that unification.

Pirenne, when he has drawn attention to the fact that about the whole of Flanders and Brabant belonged under Walloon episcopal sees, while for the Northern Netherlands there was the purely Germanic bishopric of Utrecht, makes the reflection that we therefore see the history of the Southern Netherlands from the beginning differing considerably from that of the Northern Netherlands. He, of course, wants to show us Holland and Belgium diverging right from the beginning, and Belgium prepared for the task which at that time (before the war) he believed was entrusted to her by the Providence of History : namely to act as mediator between the French and the Germanic civilisations. Now it is a fact that Flanders and Brabant have always absorbed French influences to a larger extent than Holland and the rest of the Northern Netherlands. Nothing is more natural than that French influence should work strongest on the regions nearest to France and very likely the ecclesiastical organisation did play an important part in accustoming Walloons and Flemings to live together. But if the Belgian provinces ever fulfilled their rôle of mediators between the French and the Germanic peoples, the Northern Netherlands were certainly the first to profit. It is, after all, true of them as well as of the Southern Netherlands that French influences were a powerful help to detach them from the general body of the Germanic peoples and to make them develop a culture and a nationality of their own. Flanders and Brabant did not act as a screen or as a barrier to keep French influences away from the North; they were on the contrary the best imaginable conductors. On the one hand they cultivated the French language to some extent at a very early date, and understood

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and appreciated French literature and thought ; and on the other hand their cultural unity with the North was such that any French influences they absorbed filtered through to Holland at once. Besides, I pointed out already that the North came into direct contact with the French-speaking South when in 1300 the Counts of Hainaut became Counts of Holland and Zeeland as well. How important this connection was from this particular point of view will become clear to you when I tell you that it has been possible to trace the Hainaut dialect of French in the forms of several French words as they occur in the Dutch language to-day.

The basis of the cultural unity which stretched over Flanders and Brabant as well as over the present Kingdom of Holland was of course the community of language. There was also the geographical unity, and the similarity of social conditions, and the political situation as I described it a moment ago, — but the great factor which made the growth of a common civilisation possible and which encouraged hopes for the future was the community of language. There were no greater dialectical differences in the area of the Dutch language North of the old boundary line of the Franks, than there were in all European languages at that time. And just like elsewhere, in linguistic communities where there was a stronger political unity than as yet prevailed in the Netherlands, a literary language, a common civilised language, was gradually emerging and working itself up into general acceptance. The dialect which had at first the greatest part in the formation of a Netherlands *Κοινη* was that of Flanders, the wealthiest region, in which Bruges, the greatest commercial centre of the Netherlands, was situated. There flourished the oldest Dutch literature. Maerlant was a Fleming and so was the poet of the Reinaert. Later on, when the decay of Bruges had set in, and Antwerp had risen, the centre shifted to Brabant. In any case it looked as if the Dutch language was going to bear a marked Southern character ; when, before the process had run its course, the split of the 16th century altered circumstances entirely.

Long before that time, of course, the Northern provinces had begun to make important contributions to the common civilisation. The most striking instance is perhaps offered by the great religious movement that began about the close of the 14th century. Not only Holland, but the more distant

provinces of the North East, like Overijssel and Groningen, are then seen to have been drawn definitely into the orbit of Netherlands culture. The names of Brabanders, Overijsselers and Hollanders appear pell-mell in the history of the "modern devotion," as the movement of which I am speaking is called. The great figure of Ruusbroec stands at the opening. Ruusbroec, as you know, was one of the great mystics of the later Middle Ages. In our day he has been translated into French by Hello and Maeterlinck. He was a Brabander, prior of a convent just South of Brussels. His thought was in contact with the German mystics of the time. Ruusbroec's works were eagerly read by the great founder of the Fraternity of the Common Life, Geert Groote, who lived at Deventer, and the movement which he started spread all over the Teutonic Netherlands and also Eastward, into Germany. The new religious spirit of the Brethren of the Common Life was the chief inspiration of Netherlands literature in the late 14th and in the 15th century, and the devotional writings and religious songs which were the result are of Holland as well as of Brabant origin. We see this spirit working also in art. Flanders was still the centre of the great school of primitive painting, and so we have all the Dutch-speaking provinces under the sway of one spiritual movement. And indeed, it would be tempting to demonstrate their unity by the history of the arts also. The painters who worked in Flanders were not all Flemings. Such famous men as Dirk Bouts, Hugo van der Goes, Gerard David, all came from Holland and Zeeland[1]).

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[1]) Dr. Colenbrander, in his „Belgische Omwenteling" (1905), adduces the existence of a special Holland school of primitive painting (Geertgen tot St. Jans) as evidence for his theory that a Holland nationality as distinct from a South-Netherlandish one existed already in the Middle Ages, and only waited to be developed by events. I do not doubt for a moment that Geertgen tot St. Jans shows certain characteristics which may be described as specifically Northern-Netherlandish, and which can be traced also in, say, Rembrandt. But are there not striking and constant differences between the Venetian, the Umbrian, the Florentine schools of painting? and can one on that ground deny the reality of Italian nationality? Is not every modern nation built up ont of different elements, which, unless circumstances had favoured union, might have developed particularist national consciousness? Read the characterisations of the varions regions of the modern Kingdom of Holland in the „Handboek der Nederlandsche taal" of M. van Ginneken. What variety! And yet, is there no national consciousness and no national unity to embrace the whole? Nobody will deny that there are, and always have been, differences between a Hollander and a Brabander. But that is no reason to forget how much there is to unite them.

But I have said enough to show that the political union of the Netherlands, which was now in rather an unexpected manner brought about in a very short time, was not a mere affair of dynastical ambition and Real-politik, but that it answered to some perhaps still only dimly conscious, butnone the less strong, aspirations of the Netherlands peoples themselves. Professor Terlinden, in the article in „History" which I mentioned before, looks upon the unification of the seventeen provinces under the Burgundian Dukes as „the triumph of the economic policy of the old feudal dynasties of Flanders and Brabant." Because there are, amongst the endless quarrels of the feudal period, some in which Flanders and Brabant appear disputing some bit of territory or other on the Maas or on the arms of the Scheldt to their Northern neighbour, the Count of Holland, the union of all the Netherlands under one prince is explained as a piece of Belgian commercial policy, intended to cover the access to Antwerp. Holland and the rest of the Northern Netherlands are not considered as regions with an own life, with own tendencies, but they are to be subordinated to the material interests of a Brabant town. If that were the real truth of the matter, it would cause no surprise that the unity of the Netherlands was short-lived, and Professor Terlinden himself would hardly have a right to complain that Holland turned the tables on Belgium and later on assigned to her, as he puts it, „the rôle of glacis and barrier" for her own protection. But indeed, it seems to me that his explanation is but a poor one. It starts from the entirely mistaken conception of a united Southern pitted against a united Northern Netherlands already in the 15th century, and takes into consideration only one factor out of many; it ignores all the political, all the moral forces that were making for the evolution of a Netherlands nation.

I shall not describe to you the rise to power of the house of Burgundy. It is a well-known story. The Dukes of Burgundy, princes of the Royal blood of France originally, by an amazing run of luck and of clever audacity, made themselves acknowledged rulers of one Netherlands province after another. Flanders first, then Brabant and Limburg, Hainaut, Holland and Zeeland, Luxemburg. There was a pause then, during which they lost the country of their origin, Burgundy, which the King of France, thoroughly suspicious of his powerful cousin, re-took. This only served to throw back the family more on

the Netherlands. The daughter of Burgundy married an Austrian Archduke, and their grandson, Charles V, King of Spain and German Emperor over and above what he possessed in the Netherlands, completed the Netherlands union by conquering Guelders and all the provinces of the North East. 1543 is the year of the union of all the seventeen provinces.

In the history of the great work of nation-building which the Burgundians had undertaken and the Habsburgs continued, this, then, is an important date. But the work was by no means finished. All the Netherlands now acknowledged the same prince as Duke or Count or Lord, as the case might be, but they were still a conglomerate of States rather than a State. All the several provinces had retained their ancient constitutions. They were very jealous of their p r i v i l e g e s, as their particular rights as against their sovereign were called, and they were very suspicious of attempts to make them more dependent of the central government. Holland and Zeeland and Hainaut, Brabant and Flanders, were now to a certain extent accustomed to living together, having done so, though in rather a loose connection, for over a century. But the new conquests of Charles V came into the fold with all their suspicious and their susceptibilities on edge.

The seat of the central government was Brussels. There the monarch resided, or in his frequent absences his governor. There sat the Councils which Charles V instituted to advise the government and supervise the administration. There also usually the States-General met, the assembly, that is, of delegates of the several provincial States, a great instrument of unification, but a great bulwark of particularist and class opposition to the centralising and equalising policy of the monarchy at the same time. It was obviously a very delicate undertaking to weld all these regions with their long traditions of independence together and to build a modern absolutism on their unity. There was a stubborn spirit in these Netherlands, and their centuries-old constitutions had a great power of resistance. Yet in an age when absolutism was everywhere in the ascendant, when England, France and Spain seemed definitely conquered by it, the Habsburg rulers and their councillors can be forgiven if they were confident that the future belonged to them and their system.

Looking back we have no difficulty in discerning two grave

dangers to which the nascent state was exposed. The first did not perhaps have any real influence on the catastrophe which was so soon to rend the Netherlands in two, — although, the contrary has sometimes been advanced, and it is at any rate pretty certain that it would later on have given rise to trouble. I mean the difference in language between the Walloons and the rest of the Netherlands. The Burgundian state had in its origin been French, and French retained a privileged position even after the connection with Burgundy had been cut. Brussels, the capital, was a Dutch-speaking town, but the court and the high bureaucracy who were concentrated there were largely Gallicined. The nobility who surrounded the monarch or his governor spoke French, from whichever part of the Netherlands they came originally. The Flemish and Brabant lower aristocracy and higher bourgeoisie began rapidly to be Galliciced like their superiors had been. In time the Northern provinces would probably have been affected in the same way; indeed, something of the sort took place even after they had parted company with the South. But in Flanders and Brabant no less than in the North the mass of the people remained true to their own language. The language boundary did not move. A moment was bound to come when the popular language would claim its rights. A movement of opposition must have started against the Frenchifying influence of Brussels, a movement which would insensibly have turned against the Walloon population of the South. What then ? Would the sentiment of nationality, based upon tradition and history, be strong enough to resist the divergence of the languages ? It is a question to which there is no answer. Long before this matter could be brought to an issue, the larger part of the Teutonic Netherlands started on a separate career and Flanders and Brabant, robbed of the support of their Northern kinsmen, were for some centuries subjected to an intense process of Gallicisation which left them rather nerveless. It is only in our day that Belgium is faced with the problem.

The other danger to the Netherlands State was the one which was to prove fatal. It was that its destinies fell into the hands of rulers who had other and powerful States and who wanted to use the Netherlands as a pawn in their great game of world politics. Charles V and Philip II only continued the natural development of the Netherlands when they tried to draw the

provinces closer together, to subject them to the same law and to the same administration. When they were impatient of the obstacles which the constitutional liberties of provinces, towns or classes put in their way, and when they therefore strove to make themselves absolute, they only did what all rulers of their time were doing with more or less success. But if the Netherlands peoples might have consented to give up some at least of their liberties in return for efficient government and for the realisation of national unity, strength and glory, how could they be expected to do so when the ruler who asked them to trust him was a foreigner, like Philip II, who secluded himself in Spain and who only took an interest in the Netherlands in as far as they could assist him in his schemes which embraced the whole world but in which the Netherlanders could not see that their advantage had been at all considered? A man, moreover, who, when the Netherlands were caught up in the terrible religious crisis of the 16th century, presumed to save them from perdition without consulting their inclinations, but according to the strictest tenets and by the most inhuman methods of the people to whom he belonged himself, of the bigoted, fanatical Spanish? A crash was inevitable. And in it, as we shall see next week, the unity of the Netherlands went under.

II

Last week I explained how the Netherlands came to be united under one ruler in the course of the 15th and 16th centuries; how it was the policy of the Burgundian princes and after them of the Habsburgs to draw the several Netherlands provinces closer together and to found a modern absolutism on their unity; how to all appearances a strong Netherlands state with an individual national consciousness was being formed, a state which right between France, Germany and England would have been an important power; and how, all of a sudden, it went to pieces in the revolution against Philip II's tyranny.

Now I shall ask you to observe in the first place that there was nothing in the revolutionary movement against the Spanish King and his system which in itself threatened the development of Netherlands national unity. The opposition against the despotic government and against the Inquisition was not

very much stronger in one province than in another. It was general. Indeed, it was one of those irresistible popular outbursts which may well serve to weld a people together, to intensify its national consciousness, as the Revolution did in France. It was entirely unaccompanied by separatist undercurrents. Only note how the movement began. It began at the centre, at the heart of the Netherlands state, at Brussels. I suppose that most of you are trying to recall your Motley. Well, you remember that in the beginning of the rebellious movement, in the early sixties of the 16th century, it was the nobles who took the lead. The high nobles were the least provincial class of the Netherlands people. They had their estates in a number of provinces, they served on the Council of State which knew no particularism. William of Orange was by far the ablest and strongest personality among them and before long events made him the leader of the opposition. He was Stadthouder of Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht, and he possessed much land especially in Holland. But he owned even more in Brabant. And he was a typical nobleman of the Burgundian court. French was the language in which he preferred to express himself. He never was a separatist, he was a national statesman of the young Netherlands state. His object was to curb the arbitrary Royal power, and to compel the King to govern not, as he did, in an anti-national, but in a national, sense.

William of Orange met with the fate which is common to the leaders of great popular movements — he soon found that events got out of his control, he, the leader, was rushed into dangerous courses. But this did not at first mean that the national character of the revolt was endangered. The Calvinist tidal wave swept the Netherlands from one end to the other. Calvinism, like so many other things, came to the Netherlands from France. The Walloon provinces of the South were the first to be affected. No more Calvinistic towns than Valenciennes and Tournai — Valenciennes is French to-day, by the way. — It was there that the Breaking of the Images started, in the year 1566, but from there it spread like wildfire over all the Netherlands. You know that it was this outbreak against Catholicism which so moved the wrath of Philip II that he sent the Duke of Alba with a Spanish army to punish the Netherlands. The revolt collapsed before his arrival and thousands fled to Germany and to England to escape execution. William of

Orange was amongst them and he levied an army in Germany and attempted to liberate the Netherlands, first in 1568, again in 1572. He hoped that the people would rise in his support, but the terrible Alba had cowed them too completely for them to stir. Only on the second occasion, in 1572, there had been a partial rebellion in Holland and Zeeland even before the Prince of Orange started on his campaign. But this was not what he wanted. He wanted the whole of the Netherlands to throw off the yoke. His campaign was calculated to free Brabant, the heart of the Netherlands, but Brabant did not move. Only when the campaign had failed utterly and when the prospect on all sides looked unrelievedly black, did Orange betake himself to Holland to throw in his lot with the rebel towns of the North. As he put it himself in a famous letter, he went "to make his grave there." It seemed a forlorn hope. All the great schemes for a truly national movement had come to nothing, but Orange would not leave the rebels in that outlying Northwestern corner of the Netherlands state to their fate. But now it appeared that this rebellion, partial as it was, had tremendous reserves of strength in it. For four long years a terrible war went on, the Spanish army doing the impossible to subject Holland and Zeeland again, while the other provinces looked on, divided between hope and fear.

In 1576 the scene suddenly changed. In that year Alba's successor, Requesens, died unexpectedly. The government at Brussels was stricken with impotence at a moment when nothing was more essential than strength and decision. They lost all control over the Spanish troops who had gone without pay for a long time and who now mutinied. The excesses which these soldiery committed drove the loyal provinces to despair. Particularly horrible, as all readers of Motley know, was the Sack of Antwerp. A revolutionary movement, which the feeble government was of course quite unable to repress, now began at Brussels. The States of Brabant took it upon themselves to convoke a meeting of the States-General of all the loyal provinces to discuss ways and means to get rid of the Spanish soldiery and to make peace with Holland and Zeeland. Loyalty to the King was openly declared on all occasions, yet the whole movement was essentially revolutionary. When the other provinces hesitated to obey the call of the States of Brabant, the Brusselers compelled the Council

of State, that is the representative of the King since the death of his governor, to issue a summons of their own. A semblance of legality was thus preserved, but the Council of State had been made prisoners and acted under duress.

The Prince of Orange, who followed these events from Holland with breathless interest, was in secret communication with the more ardent spirits at Brussels. The States-General representing the loyal provinces and the States of Holland and Zeeland now sent delegates to Ghent in order to negotiate on a peace and under the immediate influence of the Sack of Antwerp a treaty was concluded which the Prince of Orange might well look upon as a great triumph. The unity of the Netherlands seemed restored and the old idea of protecting the whole of them against Spanish tyranny or even making them independent, seemed now all of a sudden quite possible of realisation. Yet the Pacification of Ghent was but short-lived, and the upshot of the whole movement was, as you know, that an irremediable split occurred in the Netherlands. What was it that wrecked the national policy for which the Prince of Orange had worked ?

It was the question of religion. The opposition movement against the Spanish King had from the outset been half of a political, half of a religious nature. On the political issue it would have been possible to unite the whole nation, on the religious issue it was impossible. It was impossible, at least, in these years. In the sixties, perhaps, things looked different. But much had happened since the sixties. Alba's barbarous repression had violently interrupted the Calvinistic Reformation. In some parts of the Netherlands, especially in the South, in the Walloon provinces, Calvinism had been literally extirpated. In Holland and Zeeland, on the contrary, during the four years of their single-handed rebellion, the Calvinists had got complete control.

I must remark here in passing that Motley — admirable book, of course, his "Rise of the Dutch Republic", but not always very exact — Motley makes no graver mistake than when he asserts and repeats that the entire population of Holland and Zeeland had embraced Calvinism. The large majority of the people there as well as in the South remained true to the old religion. But the Calvinists were the most energetic party, fanatically convinced of their calling, and they supplied all

the driving power to the Revolution. It is, of course, a general phenomenon, by no means demonstrated for the first time in Russia, that Revolutions are made by minorities. It was only after the succes of the rebellion that the majority of the population in the Northern Netherlands was converted to Protestantism, often by very forcible methods.

Anyhow, majority or not, the Calvinists in Holland and Zeeland had got control of the government in their provinces, and they were not prepared to surrender it. In the loyal provinces, however, both North and South, the Catholic majority, while anxious to cooperate against Spanish tyranny with the Holland and Zeeland heretics, were as anxious not to allow Protestantism to get the upper hand in their own provinces. In the Ghent Pacification treaty the claims of Catholicism had been fully honoured. Holland and Zeeland were allowed a special position in the matter of religion, but for the rest Catholicism was to be the only acknowledged religion. A vague clause opened nevertheless a prospect of great changes by leaving the final decision of the religious problem to a future States-General, convened in a regular and legal manner.

In all this it is easy to detect the spirit of the Prince of Orange, who hoped to be able to keep the religious issue subordinate to the national one. The unfortunate thing is that this was hardly possible in the 16th century, the century of religious fanaticism. Everywhere in the provinces outside Holland and Zeeland the Calvinist party, looking upon the defeat of the Spanish policy as a victory for themselves, tried to capture power and to suppress Catholicism. Especially in Flanders were they violent. Ghent became the scene of a Calvinist terror. Before long a kind of civil war was raging in several parts of the Netherlands, and the States-General (or the Prince of Orange, who really was the moving power behind the Brussels government) were powerless to repress it. In fact, although he did his best to moderate the excesses of the Calvinist popular party, Orange could not act too strongly against them as he needed their support against the intrigues of the high nobility. These nobles had generally acquiesced in the Pacification of Ghent, but they were intensely jealous of the influence which Orange wielded, and they detested the democratic tendencies of the revolutionary party. As a class the nobles did the national cause a great deal of harm. In Holland and Zeeland, where

the middle class had all political power, the nobles were a negligible factor, and that was one of the secrets of the energy which these provinces showed. The power of resistance of some of the Eastern, but particularly of the Southern, provinces, however, was very perceptibly weakened by the intrigues, the hesitations and the treason of their nobles.

When you now imagine that in the midst of this confusion the Spaniards were trying to re-establish their position, you will readily understand what a difficult task rested upon the States-General and Orange. The Spaniards had reorganised an army which was encamped in the outlying province of Luxemburg. Against it the States-General opposed an army which had been levied for the most part in Germany, and they negotiated for help in France and in England, both countries afraid to move, but at the same time prepared to do something lest the other one should acquire too much influence in the Netherlands. As for the States-General, they were hardly able to wage war with great determination. Two or three years after the Pacification of Ghent already, in the beginning of 1579 to be exact, the chaos began to evolve something definite, and that was the break-up of Netherlands unity. In January 1579, Parma, the new Spanish governor of the Netherlands, a man of very remarkable ability, succeeded in detaching some provinces from the States-General. These provinces formed a block in the extreme South-West of the country: Hainaut, Artois, Walloon Flanders (that is Douay, Orchies and Lille.) It is most remarkable that the first provinces to desert the national cause were all Walloon. Add to this that Luxemburg, the only province which had from the beginning kept outside the States-General movement, was also half French-speaking and for the rest German. The question arises irresistibly: Has the difference in race and language nothing to do with this? It is an extremely difficult question to answer. Pirenne, of course, in his Histoire de Belgique, which, as I said last week, sets out to prove the reality of Belgian nationality composed of Walloons and Flemings, — Pirenne answers with a categorical negative. He explains it all as a matter of religion. The Walloon provinces, which in the sixties were as Calvinist as any, had since been very thoroughly re-Catholicized, and that is the only reason why Catholic resentment at the excesses of the Calvinist party in Flanders led to action there sooner than elsewhere.

Yet contemporaries already remarked on the curious coincidence of the line of political with that of race cleavage, and the tone of their references shows at least that race antagonism embittered the separation even if it was not amongst its primary causes. It is at any rate curious that the doom of Netherlands unity was sealed by regions which were themselves destined to become French before they were a century older. The whole of Artois and of Walloon Flanders and a large part of Hainaut were annexed by Louis XIV and have belonged to France ever since.

From the foothold which he had now gained Parma advanced North to reconquer the Dutch-speaking Netherlands for the King. They continued to resist as well as they could. At the time that the Walloon provinces coalesced to desert the national cause, the Northern provinces concluded a closer union with the object of resisting the Spanish armies to the utmost. I mean the famous Union of Utrecht, which was destined to become (although not so intended by its authors) the constitution of the Republic of the United Provinces. The Union of Utrecht was a very close coalition. The Provinces declared they would be united as if they had been only one Province. They would make no separate treaty. Each would be competent to regulate religion as they saw fit : which meant that they went further than the Pacification of Ghent and claimed the right to prohibit Catholicism. It had cost John of Nassau, Orange's brother, a great deal of trouble to get some of the Eastern provinces to take part. It proved impossible to include Brabant and Flanders. Yet most of the towns of those two provinces did sign the Covenant : Ghent, Bruges, Ypres, Antwerp, Breda. And the war continued. But in the nine or ten years that followed the Spaniards made steady advances, and recovered practically the whole of Flanders and Brabant. As matters went from bad to worse, cooperation between the Provinces became more and more difficult. There was some truth in the bitter complaints that Holland and Zeeland, immune from attacks by their fortunate position behind the rivers did not assist the exposed provinces to the limit of their power. On the other hand, in those unhappy provinces disorganisation and misery grew apace, and soon almost the whole charge of the war was really borne by Holland and Zeeland. Meanwhile town after town in Brabant and Flanders and also in the

Eastern and North Eastern provinces was taken by Parma, till in 1585 Antwerp fell. This really marked the end of the conquest of the Southern Netherlands. The States-General, which had step by step retired as one place after another became exposed to the Spanish attack, from Brussels to Antwerp, thence to Middelburg, now sat in Holland itself.

Holland, protected by the rivers and the Zeeland streams, seemed impregnable. It could be attacked only from the East and at first it certainly looked, in spite of the very doubtful assistance from England, as if the barrier of the Eastern provinces would be broken down by the ever advancing Spanish armies. But the turn in the tide came fairly soon after the fall of Antwerp. The army of the rebels got a chance of taking up the offensive about 1590, when the insensate policy of Philip II compelled Parma to divide his army and interfere actively in the French civil war. Maurice, the son of William of Orange, took that chance, and in a series of brilliant campaigns he cleared the Eastern frontier and made the Northern provinces reasonably safe.The offensive then turned South, but this was now no longer a matter of liberation but of conquest.

The States-General at The Hague had no longer any delegates of Flanders or Brabant on them. Those provinces were definitely brought back to obedience to the King. They had at the same time been reduced to the most awful misery and decay. The Northern Netherlands, from having been their allies and friends, became their worst enemies. And their geographical position made them very redoubtable ennemies. Zeeland commanded the entrance to the Scheldt, that is to Antwerp, not only the most important, but in reality the only, port of the Southern Netherlands. So well did the Hollanders and Zeelanders understand the value of this position that they improved upon it by occupying some places on the other side of the Scheldt. Antwerp was completely bottled up. The Southern Netherlands, once the richest part of the whole country, and the richest region of the world, were suddenly cut off from all trade with the outside world. The only people who traded with them were the Hollanders themselves, who did it at their own conditions. Antwerp was a shadow of its former self. At times famine threatened the obedient provinces. Their country districts were infested by robbers, and the troops of the States made marauding raids deep into the country. Yet the Spanish soldiery, ill-paid

and mutinous just as in the old times before the Pacification of Ghent, were perhaps the worst plague of all. But what could the unhappy provinces do against them ! They protested and complained to the government, at times the temper of 1576 seemed to come over them once more. But they had no spirit left. They were too miserable to rebel again.

And in fact, one of the most terrible things that had happend to them was that thousands of their wealthiest and most enterprising inhabitants had deserted them for the free North, retiring before the advancing armies of Parma. What the South lost, the North gained. Innumerable are the men of Flemish or Brabant origin who added lustre to the glorious period into which the Northern Republic was now about to enter. Great merchants, scholars, poets, theologians, — in all spheres of activity the Belgian refugees made names for themselves. They strengthened the Calvinist element in the North very considerably at the same time that the South was of course purged of all Calvinism. Thus there opened a wide chasm between the Northern and the Southern Netherlands. There was now no feeling of community between a young Calvinist Republic, acutely conscious of its strength and its extraordinary prosperity, and the down-trodden, spiritless and Catholic South.

The intellectual community, too, which before the split had been developing so strongly, was shattered, or at any rate very badly impaired. The Northern Netherlands now formed a school of painting quite distinct from that of Belgium. As for literature, while Holland entered upon the golden age of its literature, and a literature very distinctly, perhaps even narrowly national, that is Dutch, no longer Netherlandish, — in Belgium there hardly was any literature all through the 17th and 18th centuries. Flemish began to fall into contempt. French ruled supreme.

Of course it was mainly, if not wholly, due to its geographical position that the disaster which had overtaken the South had stopped short before the North. But as matters had fallen out, the once glorious provinces of Brabant and Flanders entered upon a long, long period of decay, while the upstarts Holland and Zeeland with their companions got into the most favourable circumstances for a quick and complete development of all their faculties and possibilities. It was in some ways a forced growth. All the potential wealth and glory of the South were

added unto that of the North. And the Dutch learned to be proud and, however unreasonably, to look down upon the Belgians. All entreaties for peace left them cold. They knew that the Southern Netherlands were but the instrument of Spain, even when Philip, in the article of death, gave them a semblance of independence under Albert and Isabella. "If you really want peace," the States-General of the North replied to one of those pitiable requests from the States-General of the South, "then drive the Spaniards out of your country. We shall be glad to assist you." But that the Southern Netherlands could not do. They were in the clutch of Spain, body and soul. How little was left of that mighty democratic spirit which had at one time moved Flanders and Brabant. The irresponsible, alien government at Brussels disposed of them at will. Only later, much later in the war — which as you know lasted eighty weary years, till the peace of Munster in 1648 — later, when France pressed them from the South and their misery had become still more unbearable, did the Southern provinces make a feeble attempt to take matters into their own hands and arrive at a private understanding with their Northern neighbours. In 1632 the Brussels government was forced to convoke an assembly of the States-General, the first since 1600. The cry of this assembly was only for peace, and the government — it was still Isabella, though no longer even nominally independent of Spain : since the death of Albert, her husband, the King of Spain had again resumed the sovereignty over the Netherlands and she administered them as his representative — Isabella, then, had to humour them so far as to allow them to carry on negotiations with the Republic. The Stadtholder Frederick Henry had then just taken the town of Maastricht, on the Maas, and situated at quite a distance from the territory of the independent provinces. It was that very campaign which had made such an impression on the South that the government for the moment did not feel safe enough to hold the reins tight. To Maastricht it was that the Southern States-General at first sent their delegates; later on the negotiations were continued in The Hague.

These negotiations of 1632 and the following years came to nothing, but to the wistful searcher after Netherlands unity this appears as one of the occasions on which the disasters of the last decades of the 16th century might perhaps have been

repaired. A little more spirit of conciliation in the North, a little more firmness in the South. . . The great obstacle, no doubt, was the inability of the Southern States-General to assert themselves against Spain. If they could have undertaken to obtain the repatriation of the Spanish troops, an arrangement might have been feasible. But the Brussels government, which had allowed them to negotiate with the secret intention never to give up a particle of its own pretentions, had very exactly taken their measure. They allowed themselves to be fooled by the government and when their promises at Maastricht or in The Hague were brushed aside by the Spanish cabinet, they acquiesced. The only people ready to rebel in the Southern Netherlands at this period were the high nobles, but they did not stand for any national cause. They were just disgruntled by the favour shown to Spaniards. As for the people, no doubt it was their profound lassitude and their no less profound estrangement from the Calvinistic Hollanders which made any energetic movement so difficult. And of course these conditions had their repercussion in the North. There was a powerful peace party in Holland, and, however suspicious people might be of Catholicism, it would have been possible to make them cnnclude with a really free Southern Netherlands. But the realisation that the Southern delegates were after all only puppets moved by Spanish strings damped the enthusiasm of the North. It is true that there was also a war party à outrance in The Hague. That party was encouraged by France which wanted Spain to be weakened by a continuation of the war. The French ambassador in The Hague, Charnacé, succeeded in winning the Stadtholder, who at first had inclined towards peace. So the policy of conciliation which might have led to a close alliance was given up, and another policy came in its place, that of conquest in conjunction with France.

Indeed, Spain was able to prevent Belgium and Holland from coming together again, but it was not able to protect Belgium from ruin and dismemberment. While the French advanced in the South of Flanders, Frederick Henry captured town after town in the North. The two allies had made arrangements about the division of the Southern Netherlands. Roughly, the Teutonic Netherlands were to be the spoil of the Republic of the United Provinces, while the Walloon regions were to become

French. So even now that reconciliation had failed, the sword might have reunited those parts of the Southern with the Northern Netherlands which would be most easily assimilated. The language boundary might have become a political frontier after all.

Yes, — but there were many in the North who did not look favourably upon these plans. What was to be the position in the Republic of the conquered regions? So far there had been but one way. Important stretches of Flanders and Brabant, lately even of Limburg (I mentioned the capture of Maastricht), had been conquered by the armies of the Seven United Provinces. Those regions were not given representation on the States-General ; they were not even allowed a provincial assembly of their own ; they were administered in the name of the States-General, they were considered as territory belonging to the Generality, that is to the Seven Provinces jointly. This arrangement, by the way, was perpetuated after the peace of Munster and lasted as long as the Republic, that is to 1795. According to the ideas of the time it was impossible to act otherwise, for the inhabitants of those parts — Maastricht, 's Hertogenbosch, Breda, Sluis, etc. — were Catholics almost to a man. As long as this conquered territory was not very extensive, there was no very particular danger attached to this arrangement, but would it be practicable to extend it over the whole of Flanders and Brabant once they had been recovered? And if not, was the policy of conquest then wise for a Protestant Republic? To this consideration was added another one. As long as the war lasted, the Scheldt remained closed and Antwerp bottled up as a matter of course. And even this arrangement it was found possible to perpetuate after the peace of Munster right up to the downfall of the old order of things. But what if Antwerp had been conquered? Would it be possible to keep the Scheldt closed then? Immense vested interests were by now based upon the closure of the Scheldt. The extraordinary development of Amsterdam would have been impossible without it, and Amsterdam was a power in the Republic. Amsterdam dit not want the capture of Antwerp. More than once its opposition hampered the attempts of the Stadtholder to take the town. Besides, these same Amsterdammers and their friends in the States of Holland and elsewhere began to be afraid of the rising imperialism of France and they

thought it bad policy to help France start on her career of conquest and especially as by so doing the buffer-state between France and Holland would disappear. They thought that France, while a desirable friend at a distance, might prove a troublesome neighbour. „Gallum amicum, non vicinum," as the phrase ran.

So the policy of conquest in alliance with France was abandoned again, and as Spain was now thoroughly frightened by the progress which France made in the South of Belgium, it was possible to make peace. But it was a different sort of peace from that which might have been concluded in 1632. Now there were no States-General sitting at Brussels with whom the Hague States-General could claim to negotiate by preference. It was Spain now that made peace with the Republic of the United Provinces, and it was Belgium that paid the price. The peace of 1648 governed the position of Belgium for nearly a century and a half. It presumed to consign the unhappy country for ever to a state of economic stagnation and of international helplessness. There was now no feeling of fellowship left in the Republic of the Seven Provinces for the brothers who had failed to free themselves, and the King of Spain was going to reward them ill for their loyalty to him. The Scheldt remained closed, that is to say Antwerp was sacrificed to Amsterdam. And for the rest Belgium was considered as no more than so much land between Holland and France, no state with a life and interests of its own, but a mere buffer-state, destined to stand between Holland and the blows from France.

This function became fully apparent only when the territorial ambitions of Louis XIV stood fully revealed. Holland then became the faithful ally of Spain and helped her to protect her Netherlands possessions against the French attacks. In three long and terrible wars beteen 1672 and 1713 the Dutch armies again fought in the Southern Netherlands, but as allies this time. The price of their help was laid down in the Barrière-treaty of 1715, when France after the war of the Spanish Succession was at last definitely held in check. During that war the position of the Dutch troops in Belgium can hardly be described as that of allies. They were more like conquerors. Nominally they conquered the land for the Austrian Habsburg who was to inherit the possessions of the extinct Spanish branch of the family. But in reality the Dutch acted as if they conquered for their own account. Nor was their administration very

mild or generous. The English generals and governors, who acted jointly with the Dutch, were no better. The great object of the two sea-powers was the economic exploitation of the country which they conquered for the Austrian ruler, and the Barrière-treaty of 1715 was designed to regulate and fix that exploitation. Indeed, this treaty did more than confirm, it was a terrible aggravation of, the Peace of Munster. As the new Austrian ruler was expected to take only a half-hearted interest in the defence of his Netherlands, the Republic was given the right to garrison a number of Belgian towns on the frontier of France. A servitude of the first magnitude in the interest of Holland was therefore laid on Belgium. In practice Holland never had much advantage of the arrangement, which was yet very galling to the Belgians. But much worse were the economic provisions of 1715, and here England both exploited and profited along with Holland. Belgium was systematically and impudently sacrificed to the commerce of the two maritime powers. The Scheldt remained hermetically closed, but a whole cunning system of both export and import tariffs was now fastened upon the Southern Netherlands so as to make them entirely dependent on Dutch and English commerce and so as to kill all Belgian industry which Dutch and English competitors feared.

It is a very sad and sordid business. We must not forget, of course, that the 18th century had not our conceptions of international morality. Still, we must not therefore try to defend these wicked and inhuman arrangements. They were utterly indefensible, and nothing is more natural than that they filled the hearts of the Belgian people with resentment. There is a nemesis for immoral policy like this. For Holland it was that she was laying up for herself a store of evil memories in the soul of the Belgian people, which in the next century were to prove a serious obstacle to re-union. Even in our time Belgians feel sore over these matters. One of the most wicked incidents of this régime was the hounding out of existence by the joint efforts of England and Holland of a Belgian Overseas Trading Company at Ostend, with which it was sought to evade the ban on Belgian commerce pronounced by the closure of the Scheldt. About that miserable affair a very good book has been written some 15 years ago by a Belgian historian, M. Huisman, and as a sample of indignant

historical writing it is most interesting. It seems to me, however that the historian, while not defending, should yet try to explain these actions as the result of circumstances and of the spirit of the time, and should abstain from holding them up as evidence of the wickedness of a particular nation. Professor Terlinden, whose article on the history of the Scheldt in the current number of „History" I mentioned last week, does another thing, which to my view a Belgian historian writing for an English public should be careful not to do. He omits all mention of the very active share which England took in the economic oppression of Belgium during the 18th century.

From the point of view of these lectures there is no sadder spectacle than that of the relations between Holland and Belgium in the 18th century, the relation of oppressors and oppressed. We can now see how gradually and naturally it had all come about. The prosperity and power of the Northern Netherlands, the decay and humiliation of the Southern Netherlands, the ascendancy of the one, the helplessness of the other, it all followed with inexorable logic from the rebellion and the success of Holland and the failure of Brabant and Flanders. The split which success and failure had caused was repeated in the moral sphere by the re-Catholisation of the South and the Protestantisation of the North; it was now aggravated by feelings of contempt on the one, and of resentment on the other side.

The iniquitous system of 1648 and 1715 lasted as long as the ancien régime. The Austrian rulers had from time to time tried to get it softened. But Vienna was as little fit to look after the interests of Belgium as Madrid had been. The most determined attempt of all was made by Joseph II, quite at the close of the old period — although men knew it not—. The proud Republic of the United Provinces had then fallen on evil days and the Austrians seemed ready to risk a war in order to get the Scheldt opened. But France, closely allied with the party which then ruled at The Hague, came to the rescue and the Scheldt remained closed. That was in 1785. A few years later a rebellion broke out in Belgium against Austrian rule. The leaders turned to Holland with proposals of a federation. It is difficult to say whether they could ever have succeeded, but in any case the statesmen of Holland were so entirely the prisoners of their old, bad systems, they lacked foresight

and vision to such a degree that they spurned the idea of a free Belgium and wanted to have an Austrian Belgium in order to exploit it in all eternity. Austrian rule was restored in Belgium, but three years afterwards the French Revolutionary armies conquered Belgium and opened the Scheldt forcibly. Two years later, in 1795, they advanced into Holland, where the old régime came tottering down. Belgium was now part of France for some twenty years. France also annexed the South bank of the Scheldt and Maastricht. Holland was a sort of vassal state till 1810, when she, too, was annexed. So the Netherlands were again united under one ruler, Napoleon, but again, as in the days of Philip II, that ruler was a foreigner, and the centre of gravity of his enormous possessions lay outside the Netherlands.

Next week we shall see how at the fall of the Napoleonic Empire the Netherlands at last, for the first time in history, achieved unity under a national ruler ; and how they lost it again.

III

We saw last week how after some centuries during which the one had learned to be proud of its independence and prosperity while the other had almost got accustomed to a state of vasselage and of oppression, Holland and Belgium found themselves together under the rule of a foreign conqueror, Napoleon. The ways in which the two countries reacted to French ascendancy were very different. Holland, of course, was annexed only in 1810, although she had been virtually dependent on France ever since 1795. But the period of actual annexation, which lasted only three years in Holland 's case, lasted twenty years for Belgium. If at the end of it Belgium appeared as much more a part of the French Empire than Holland, it was due to that difference of time in the first place. Yet there were important factors besides. The Dutch were infinitely more conscious of their individual nationality than the Belgians. That was true in a general sense, but it was particularly true in relation to France. On a former occasion I drew your attention to the fact that the Netherlands conquests of Louis XIV — Artois, South Flanders and part of Hainaut — have become entirely assimilated to

France. There can be little doubt that in time the remainder of Belgium, and at least of the Walloon provinces — Hainaut, Namur, the Southern fringe of Brabant, Liège and Luxemburg — would have gone the same way. The community of language was of course a very powerful factor towards the complete absorption of those regions. As for the Dutch-speaking parts of Belgium, Flanders, Brabant and Limburg, „Frenchification" had naturally made great progress there during the French period. I observed already in my second lecture that ever since the 16th century the Flemish upper bourgeoisie had become more and more Gallicied. The language of the people was looked down upon, administration, law and higher education all began to employ French more and more. Under French r é g i m e that tendency was of course greatly intensified. The government now did its utmost to stamp out the Flemish language, or at least to relegate it to the kitchen and the back-streets. The magistrature and the bureaucracy in Belgium, when the Napoleonic Empire fell, were entirely French in language and in outlook. As for the people, they certainly were still Flemish to the core. But they accepted the daily insults to their language with resignation, with indifference. Those were the days when "the lower classes of society", as the politer phrase was, or „the rabble", as the gentlemen called them amongst themselves, were still a passive element in the political community. When the leading classes despised their language, they were inclined to follow their example and to believe that the language of the leading classes was of a higher kind, was the natural language for rulers, administrators, intellectuals, and for all who aspired to become one of them or to associate with them. It is thus, of course, that languages go lost. It is thus, for instance, that in the same period of which I am now speaking Gaelic was being replaced by English over large parts of Ireland. And who knows but what Flemish, too, might have been driven out by French, if the Napoleonic régime had lasted much longer.

In Holland, on the contrary, where there was not this cleavage between one part of the people and another and between one class and another, the annexation to France had never been acquiesced in, it had always been felt as a national disgrace, and people looked eagerly for all chances to end it. The

wars with England, moreover, had brought ruin to Dutch trade, while Belgium, whose trade since the Scheldt was closed in 1585 had never been allowed to flourish, had prospered economically during the French period. Yet, in one respect the Dutch people had taken more kindly to the French rule than the Belgian. The Belgians were an intensely Catholic people. There certainly was a group, strong especially amongst the higher middle class, the official and professional classes, who were imbued with the ideas of the French Revolution and who were therefore the more inclined to let themselves be absorbed by the French nation. But the mass of the people detested the modern principles. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that the clergy detested them, particularly in so far as they undermined its power and privileges, and that the mass of the people recognised the clergy as their natural leaders and blindly followed them. In Holland there was perhaps not such a large proportion of the intellectual classes who accepted the French Revolution in its furthest consequences. But the administrative and juridical reforms, which the French Empire had introduced into Holland, were generally admitted to be excellent. They were retained as a matter of course when French rule collapsed, while in Belgium the departure of the French armies and the French p r é f e t s was the sign for a widespread movement of opposition to these innovations, especially to the marriage laws.

At the same time, and this is very important, it was not these political opinions, it was the strength of their national consciousness and of their national traditions, which determined the attitude of the two peoples in the hour of crisis for the Napoleonic Empire. In Holland the people rose already in November 1813, when French officials and French troops were still in the country and before the approaching Russian and Prussian armies had crossed the Dutch frontiers. A Dutch State sprang into existence again quite naturally. It found its natural head in William of Orange, son of the last Stadtholder, who had been driven out of the country in 1795. William of Orange was brought to Holland in an English man-of-war. The whole nation rallied round him and he was acclaimed as its sovereign. With one bound Holland was back in the comity of independent States. The Allies — Allies against France it was in those days — did not hesitate to recognize

her independence. They knew with whom to deal. A government, supported by a nation with a long tradition of independence, was there. Holland had its appointed place in the ranks of the Allies themselves. It stepped into it with assurance.

Belgium 's case was widely different. The Belgians did not rise against the foreign oppressor, they waited till they were delivered by the Allies. Indeed, a national movement like that which swept over Holland could hardly be expected from them. A large proportion of them had come to look upon France as their country. The majority, certainly, had little love for French rule. But there was no strong and living tradition of independence for them to fall back upon. Before it became French, the country had been Austrian. When the French occupation was clearly doomed, the Belgians knew no better than to look to Austria again. A deputation was sent to Vienna. But Austria had no mind to burden herself with that outlying and dangerous possession again. Not even an Archduke to reign over an independent Belgium was available. Belgium's position in Europe was therefore completely drawn into question. It was as vague and uncertain as that of Holland was clear. For the moment Belgium was no more than a number of départements of the French Empire, conquered and to be disposed of by the Allies.

Now the Allies held certain views as to the use which could be made of this Belgian territory. Even before he left England in response to the call of the Dutch, William of Orange had obtained a promise from the English government that they would, if circumstances allowed, strengthen the position of Holland by adding some territory to it. The English view was at once accepted by the other Allies, and the terms which France had to accept in 1814 contained a clause by which she recognized Holland as a sovereign state and admitted that Holland would receive „un accroissement de territoire". Belgian land would of course have to provide this aggrandisement of Holland. The only question was : how much of it ? That question was debated between the Allies for many months while the conquest of Belgium proceeded. At first it was to be little more than Antwerp. Then, when it was positively known that Austria would have none of Belgium, while the collapse of Napoleon became more and more com-

plete, the proposed addition to Holland grew and grew. William I was insatiable. He wanted not only Belgium, but the Rhine-province, up to the Moselle, as well. But he had to do with a formidable rival there: Prussia, who at one time wanted even parts of Belgium, Liège, and even Maastricht, old Dutch territory, for herself. At last practically the whole of the old Austrian Netherlands with the addition of Liège, which under the ancien régime had always remained nominally independent under its bishops, was joined with Holland.

Now why were the Allies so generous? Did they act in response to an irresistible popular movement for the restoration of Netherlands unity in the two countries themselves? No. In Holland there was more suspicion and aversion than enthusiasm for the idea of the union. The nationalist excitement of 1813 had been a purely Dutch affair. The Dutch felt themselves to constitute a closed nation and they looked askance at the Catholic intruders. It was the new sovereign and the small circle of his advisers who wanted the union. As for the Belgians, their inchoate national sentiment could not at once find its bearings when Austria washed her hands of them, but for re-union with Holland there was little enthusiasm.

It is true that the agents of the Sovereign — such was William's title before he assumed the title of King in 1815 — who tried to rouse the Belgian people before their fate was decided upon by the Allies and while the country was still provisionaly administered in their name, — met with some support. In a place like Ghent, for instance, there was the beginning of an Orangist movement. But this certainly had very little effect on the attitude of the Allies. In fact, Lord Clancarty, the British minister at The Hague, and a kind of mentor to the new Sovereign who had to thank England for so much and who still had so much to expect from her, Lord Clancarty was highly indignant at the activities of these agents. He observes that it was only „the people of the very lowest order" who declared for the Prince of Orange, while „the people of property and respectability took another course". No more was required, in his view, to show the impolicy of such proceedings. No, the age of the treaty of Vienna was not the age of self-determination and the wishes of the peoples played a very subordinate rôle in the creation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Only considerations of strategy and of the balance of power in Europe moved the Allies. France had been the disturbing element in the society of nations for a century and a half. Men thought that danger was for ever to come from the side whence it had come for so long. Holland had during the whole of that period occupied an important and an exacting post in the ranks of those who defended the liberties of Europe against French aggression. Lately it had become only too apparent that she was no longer strong enough for the responsibilities of her position. Not even the „barrier" in Belgium had been able to save her. It was not enough, therefore, to restore her, she must be strengthened, and that by better means than that of the antiquated barrier system. The whole of Belgium must now serve to put Holland in a better position to acquit herself of her task of acting as the advance-guard of England on the continent. The order of ideas to which these arguments belong is still powerful over men's minds. Put France in the place of England, Germany and Russia in the place of France, Poland for Holland, Lithuania for Belgium, and you have the case of 1814 in our own day. And a century ago at any rate this policy received a dramatic justification by the course of events. In 1815 Napoleon returned from Elba. The Alliance at once placed its armies against him in the field again. Among them, the new Netherlands army was a most important item. It was against the new Netherlands state that Napoleon struck his last great blow, and the Netherlands army under the young Prince of Orange contributed materially to the victory of Waterloo.

Both in Holland and in England most people had expected that the Belgian troops would prove unreliable against a French army. But they fought as well as the Dutch, and so it seemed for a moment, as if the common victory would weld the new state strongly together. But in reality everything remained to be done in that respect. The estrangement of two centuries and a half was not to be obliterated in a few months. To the impartial onlooker it certainly could seem as if King William had some reasons to be confident of the future. The new Netherlands state was by no means so hopeless a case as, f.i., the Habsburg Empire with which Northern Italy had now been united. The same factors that made for unity in the days of the Burgundians still applied. The Netherlands were

still situated on the same exposed spot between the big nations of Europe, where the strength born of unity was only too necessary. They were still inhabited down to the old boundary-line that runs from Maastricht westward to the Channel by a population of the same race and speaking the same language. Yet formidable obstacles had to be overcome which did not yet exist in the days of the Burgundian Dukes. Then, unity had to be developed out of an infinity of particularisms. Now, in stead of particularism there was dualism, a much more stubborn thing. The two halves of the Netherlands had each gravitated towards a different centre, and so strong was the position of each of these centres that one could not be sacrificed to the other. It was decided that both Brussels and The Hague would be the capitals of the new state, the government residing one year in the one town, next year in the other. And it was not only that the new Kingdom consisted of two peoples accustomed to live each on its own, there were, as I explained last time, only too good reasons for the two to look upon each other with suspicion. The Belgians could not so easily forget the economic oppression which they had been made to suffer under the ancien régime. But more dangerous than all this for the growth of a Netherlands national idea was the fact that Belgium, in so far she had not developed an individual national sentiment, had learned to look South in stead of North : at every step the Netherlands government was to meet the influence of France at work in Belgium, and France was a powerful rival for Holland to stand up to ! It would have been difficult enough for any government to persuade Dutch consciousness and Belgian consciousness to merge themselves in a new Netherlands nationality. But this state of affairs was worse. Belgian consciousness was weak because it had been largely captured by France. It was only because Europe — and especially England — would not permit it that Belgium could not remain a part of France. Under those circumstances the task of consolidating the new state became inevitably a work of countering French influences by Dutch, it became a task for Hollanders, Holland was to have an active, Belgium a passive, rôle : her national soul was to be contended for by Holland and France. The preponderating part of Holland in the government of the new state was therefore quite inevitable. The Great Powers had recog-

nized that necessity when they laid down some of the conditions on which the union was to take place. Holland and Belgium were to form one integral entity. There was to be nothing in the nature of the arrangement by which the conquered parts of Brabant and Flanders had in the 17th and 18th centuries been „Generality lands" of the Republic. Yet it was laid down that in the Netherlands parliament the Belgian provinces, whose inhabitants numbered about 3.250.000, should have no more representatives than the Dutch provinces, where only some 2.000.000 people lived. The King, of course, the descendant of the Stadtholders, a Protestant, was essentially a Dutchman, and from Holland he took all his most trusted advisers. To the very last his government, which was simply a body of administrators, of c o m m i s as the British Ambassador called them, for the personal power of the King was very great in spite of the Constitution, — the government consisted for the most part of Dutchmen. The new Kingdom really was the old Holland „avec un accroissement de territoire". Only, the additional territory was larger (at least it contained more inhabitants) than the original. And the question was : would Holland be able to swallow such a large morsel?

The government, some of its members at least, especially Van Maanen, a very able man, who certainly influenced the King's mind strongly on this particular point, — the government saw very clearly what the strongest foundation for the unity of the Kingdom ought to be : the community of language between Holland and the larger part of Belgium. The King's most real interest was in economic affairs. He did much for the prosperity of the country and Belgian interests were in no sense allowed to stand behind. Industry flourished in the South, Antwerp prospered more than Amsterdam now that the Scheldt was open, canals were constructed to give an outlet to Liège and to Ghent. But Van Maanen was certainly right when he submitted that the best way to revive a sound national feeling in Belgium, the strongest incentive towards Netherlands unity, was to restore the position of the Dutch language in the Dutch-speaking provinces. The Dutch language, the only language which the large majority of the inhabitants knew, was to be the only official language in those provinces as in Holland ; the only language to be used in the administration, in the courts of law, by the public

notaries. The Dutch language was to be recognized as the national language of the Kingdom. The King himself called it so, and said expressly that it was the language of the government. For the people of Flanders and Brabant, who in the Middle Ages used to ask their French-speaking princes for special „privileges" prohibiting the official use of French, this was in reality a most salutary reform. The Dutch statesman was right when he described the position of the French language in those regions as the badge of foreign domination, as one of the great difficulties in the way of education and of a healthy public spirit. It is instructive to compare the state of popular education in Belgium with that in Holland at this time. As late as 1825 of the 240.000 children who went without education in the whole of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 228.000 lived in the Belgian provinces, and of those again undoubtedly the larger proportion was to be found in the Flemish-speaking provinces.

But amongst the leading classes, the officials, the lawyers, the aristocrats, who had almost forgotten the Flemish which they despised as an uncouth p a t o i s, this reform was naturally most impopular. We can see in Belgium to-day, now that a great volume of popular feeling backs up the so-called Flemish movement, how formidable is the opposition which has to be overcome. No wonder that in the tens and twenties of last century, when the democracy in Flanders and Brabant was still fast asleep, the task proved arduous, even though the government put its shoulders under it. Only if the popular feeling of the Flemish-speaking masses could have been awakened to support the official policy, would the language question have proved easy of solution. But the people, I repeat, were hardly articulate as yet. And they could the less be got to look upon the official language policy as a matter which was their own particular concern and worth their enthusiastic support, as in other things the government was so entirely out of sympathy with the South and gave them only too much reason to look upon it as a Dutch, a foreign, government.

The new r é g i m e had opened with very serious trouble over a religious question, and before long the King and his government were in open war with the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Belgium. One of the points which the Great

Powers had stipulated before the union was brought about was that all religions were to have the same rights in the new Kingdom. It is curious to note that the Powers were more liberal for the Netherlands than they were for themselves: you remember that in Great Britain, for instance, the Catholics were emancipated only in 1827. But the Revolution had swept over the Netherlands. The disabilities of the Roman Catholics in Dutch Brabant were ended in 1795 already, and in Holland nobody thought that the Southern Catholics could enter on any other terms. But they were not satisfied with equality. They wanted to have the Catholic Church recognised as the only one in the Belgian provinces. When the Constitution, which was accepted practically unanimously by the Dutch, was submitted to an assembly of Belgian citizens, it was rejected by a large majority. The priests had carried on a vehement agitation against it, threatening to refuse the absolution to anyone who voted for it. Especially in the Flemish-speaking provinces had their orders been obeyed. The majority of those who voted yes came from the liberal Walloon regions. The Constitution was nevertheless carried through by the government, and the Belgian clergy went on to protest against it and to forbid officials to take the oath upon it. The government had not managed this affair with very remarkable tact, but yet it cannot be said that it was mainly responsible for the unfortunate quarrel with which the new reign started. What was worse is that it continued to blunder badly in its religious policy, and that some years later it gave the Roman Catholics very grave reasons for dissatisfaction. William I was an autocrat by temperament. He was by no means a reactionary, on the contrary, he was a man of the new era. He wanted progress and enlightenment, only he wanted it in his own fashion. The wrong-headedness of people who had other ideas than his own, were they Catholics or orthodox Protestants, made him impatient. He was a sort of Napoleon on a small scale. No person less suited to act the delicate part of a Protestant prince over Catholic subjects can be well imagined. Indeed, he was as little suited to reconcile the liberal, Voltairian Belgians with his rule. The union began, as we saw, with a little goodwill at least on the part of the Belgian Liberals. Before many years had passed, they were more violent in their opposition even than the Clericals. After having

exasperated the latter by prosecutions of recalcitrant priests, after having made them furious by the resuscitation of a scheme which already in 1790 had caused the Catholic rebellion against Joseph II, the introduction namely of compulsory state education for Roman Catholic priests, a most objectionable piece of state despotism no doubt, — after these anti-clerical thrusts at the Catholic party, the King went on to antagonize the Liberals by a series of prosecutions of journalists, by ignoring the voice of parliament, by denying the rights of opposition. Before long Belgian Liberalism was carrying on a determined fight against autocracy and for ministerial responsibility. The stand taken by the Belgian Liberals was quite justified. The constitutional reforms they asked for were bound to come sooner or later. There was nothing in their demands, one should say, which must endanger the unity of the new state.

No, not in those demands themselves. But that they found no echo in the Nothern half of the Kingdom, that was a very serious thing. The Dutch members of parliament always voted en bloc for the government. They bolstered up the autocracy which the Belgian opposition tried to pull down. The result was that the Belgian opposition became anti-Holland as well as anti-King. The disastrous divergence between the tempers of the two peoples was not due to any permanent causes. The Dutch are no more lovers of autocracy than the Belgians are ; it is as little in their traditions. But the period following on 1813 was a very dull period in the national life of Holland. People had gone through so many revolutions and catastrophes since 1787 that they had an overpowering desire for rest. National independence, returning prosperity, an end to barren party warfare and a trusted leader of the revered house of Oranje at the head, to whom all responsibility could be left, — it seemed an idyllic state of things, which satisfied people completely. They did not understand the unrest in Belgium. The clerical agitation, of course, however justifiable it may seem to us now, was difficult to appreciate for a Protestant people who were wont to speak of Catholicism in terms such as „popish bigotry" or „superstition". As for the liberal opposition, its close connection with French Liberalism made Dutchmen doubly suspicious. They saw in it disaffection rather than a legitimate political move-

ment. So the King could proceed on his course of obstinate and reckless despotism sure of the support of his Hollanders, and that it was which finally wrecked his Kingdom.

Everybody knows that a rebellion broke out in Brussels in August 1830 and that after a few months it led to the secession of the whole of the Belgian provinces. The Belgian Catholics and the Belgian Liberals had combined shortly before. The King's autocratic power was equally objectionable to both. The combination, which more than doubled their forces, was therefore not unnatural. Yet not even their immediate aims were identical. The Liberals were prepared to go further, and it was the Liberals who took the lead in 1830. The Liberals were the minority, but events elsewhere brought them to the forefront. I mean the July Revolution in France, which ended the legitimist and clerical monarchy of the Bourbons and put the Liberals in power with Orléans. The leaders of the Brussels revolt wanted union with France. Brussels was at that time already the most French of the Flemish-speaking towns. The liberal bourgeoisie from which the De Potters and the Gendebiens sprang were greatly attracted by the Paris Revolution, pale reflection of 1789 though it was. Outside Brussels they found their first and most determined supporters in the Walloon provinces, especially Liège, where Liberalism was also strong, and hundreds of active supporters streamed to them from Paris itself. The clerical party which was particularly powerful in Flanders, Brabant and Limburg, the Dutch-speaking provinces, hesitated for a while. Union with France to them seemed less attractive now that the Bourbons had disappeared. They were ready to compromise, to be content with concessions, and the government on its part seemed to realise that concessions were necessary. Meanwhile the army made an attempt to occupy Brussels and put down the revolt. It failed, blood flowed, the army retreated northward. Then the revolt suddenly spread over all Northern Belgium in the rear of the discomfited army. There was no reason why it should stop at the frontier of the old Dutch Republic : the population of the old Generality lands differed in nothing from that of the adjoining Belgian regions. In fact, some towns in Catholic North Brabant were much disaffected. Only the presence of the army caused the old frontier to spring into life again as the frontier of the revolution ; Maastricht was only held by

force. On the other hand, at Ghent and Antwerp there were strong Orangist sympathies.

On the whole, however, once things had gone so far, the revolt very soon had the effect of splitting the Netherlands into the two parts which before the union had existed independently for so long. In the protestant North, not a man stirred. Not only were there no troubles there, but the events in the Southern provinces roused violent indignation in Holland. The national movement in the South had its counterpart in the North. The two peoples opposed each other in a tragic inability to understand each other's motives. In fact, so high did nationalist passions run in Holland that they made it exceedingly difficult for the government to adopt a conciliatory attitude. The fifteen years of union had not brought the two peoples any nearer. On the contrary. As long as the Dutch could see nothing in Belgium but Ultramontanism and Gallophilism, they felt inclined to shut themselves up more completely than ever in their own particular nationalism. While their lack of sympathy and understanding had the effect of encouraging Belgian separatism and of throwing the Flemings into the arms of the Walloons and of France.

Indeed, France would have been the immediate inheritor of the Belgian Revolution, if it had not been for the other Great Powers. The Kingdom of the Netherlands, as we saw, was created to be a bulwark against France. It was bad enough that it broke up so soon afterwards, (although for England at least there were compensations ; the new state had proved a formidable competitor in the world market), — at any rate, to allow one half of it to be joined with France, never ! King William had at first some hopes that the Powers would help him to bring the rebels back to obedience. But there was a very real desire to maintain peace in the Europe of 1830. England, moreover, the real author of the short-lived Kingdom, had internal difficulties to contend with, and soon the Duke of Wellington's Tory government had to make place for the Whig cabinet of Lord Grey. The Whigs and the French July liberals understood each other very well. A compromise was reached. Belgian independence was recognised, but union of Belgium with France was ruled out. The Belgians would have to stand on their own. They still tried to get at least a French king, but even that was denied

them. At last, after many months of confusion and international intrigues, after even a partition of Belgium, like in the 17th century, had been discussed, the Belgian Convention united on the choice of Leopold of Coburg, the protégé of England. The neutralisation of the new state was a concession to France. The Great Powers — the London Conference — had meanwhile laid down conditions for the separation of the two countries, conditions which they had rather frivolously altered at the instance of one of the parties, Belgium. It was to protest against this alteration that the King of Holland deliberately broke the armistice which the Powers had arranged; his army invaded Belgium, routed the still very raw Belgian army, retreating only, as arranged beforehand, before a French army, which came to protect the new Kingdom. The object of the campaign was only to obtain better conditions of separation. The King had openly to state as much, not only to pacify European opinion, but to get the support of the Dutch people as well, who were full of enthusiasm for what they called „teaching them a lesson", but who would never have countenanced a policy of re-conquest : so glad were they that the union was a thing of the past.

The conditions of separation were changed again, now in favour of Holland. They were based on the principle that all territory which had been Dutch in 1790 (before the period of violent changes) was to remain Dutch. This meant that Holland was to have the whole of the old Generality lands, including Maastricht where the people were undoubtedly pro-Belgian. Maastricht was to be linked up with Holland — in the olden time it had been an enclave — by a strip of country along the Maas in return for which the King had to part with half of his own particular possession, the Grandduchy of Luxemburg. Guarantees were given Belgium for the free use of the waterways which she had in common with Holland, of the Scheldt in the first place. Those guarantees have made it possible for Belgian commerce to prosper exceedingly up to the outbreak of the war. As you know they have now been strengthened on some points where they might be thought to be insufficient.

The separation was not immediately consummated. King William, who probably imagined that something might still happen to restore his shattered Kingdom, made difficulties

about signing, and an entirely useless and most vexatious delay of some eight years intervened before the treaties were finally confirmed : that was in 1839. The r é g i m e of 1839 has enabled the two peoples to live side by side in amity and peace. In Belgium, especially at Ghent and Antwerp, where the loss of the Dutch colonies was felt, and where perhaps Flemish consciousness was strongest, there was for some time an Orangist party of some strength. It did not last long. In the same way the pro-Belgian population of Dutch Limburg was soon reconciled to the connection with Holland. Nobody has ever thought of restoring the union which had failed so sadly. If nowadays one can often hear Flemish and Dutch intellectuals speak of the rupture of 1830 with regret, it should be understood that this sentiment is purely academic ; it is not, nor is it meant to be, practical politics. But if all this is so, does not the work of 1814, the creation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands itself stand condemned ? I do not think so. I think that the failure of the union was largely due to fortuitous, to personal, to transitory causes. And in spite of my conviction that the experiment can never be repeated, I think that it is useful to make this clear and to get away from the fatalistic conception that the union obviously could not but fail, because as a matter of fact it failed.

It is difficult to estimate the share which the King 's temperamental shortcomings and mistakes of judgment had in the disaster of 1830. It must have been very geat, and one must add to it a fair share of his son, the Prince of Orange, a man of an entirely different character and entirely different views, who at one time enjoyed a great personal popularity in Belgium, but whose interferences with his father's Belgian policy had ultimately none but the most deplorable effects. But let us look at the broader issues. The government, as we have seen, made itself unpopular in Belgium mainly for three reasons. In the first place there were its autocratic tendencies and its attitude towards Liberalism. In the second place there was its stiff and Erastian method for dealing with the Roman Catholic Church. In the third place there was its attempt to restore Flemish in the administration and in the law courts of Flemish Belgium. It was, however, not only the government. Much more serious was that on all three points the two peoples were out of sympathy. Yet see what has happened since the separation has taken place.

First of all Liberalism awakened in Holland. Ministerial responsibility, which was the great cry of the Belgian opposition and for which they could stir no interest amongst the Dutch, is asked for in the thirties and conquered by the young Dutch liberal opposition in 1840 already. William I, after having driven the Belgians from him, is now vanquished by Dutch Liberalism and abdicates. In 1848 a constitution is adopted in Holland not less advanced than the one which the new Kingdom of Belgium had made for itself. The official attitude towards the Catholics changes altogether. Catholicism becomes stronger and stronger politically in Holland, till in our day in close alliance with orthodox Protestantism it remodels the education laws of the country and supplies governments to it. To-day the Dutch Premier is a Roman Catholic. These are changes in Holland. On the third point there is noticeable a change in Belgium.

Belgium as it was founded in the thirties of last century, in the violent reaction against the Dutch r é g i m e, was designed to be a French state. The Revolution had been essentially a middle class movement. The men who had failed to get the country annexed to France had yet full control and they tried deliberately to make French the only language of the unitarian Belgian state. The Flemish people, without any real political power, again bereft of the support of their Northern kinsmen and badly educated as a result of the very position of their language, were not in a position to defend themselves very well. It is true that the language r é g i m e of the union, though it failed to stimulate Flemish consciousness to any great extent, had still done some good. For fifteen years officials and lawyers had been forced to use the language of the people. When a few months before the rebellion the government, under the effect principally of agitation at Brussels, made the use of the languages facultative, the bars of places like Antwerp and Malines continued to use Flemish. After the rebellion, however, Flemish was banned as completely as circumstances would permit. But something was changed after all. There was no longer that complete acquiescence which had been so ominous a feature of the situation in the 18th century and under the French. A few idealists took up the cause of the people's language, and the Flemish Movement was born into the world very shortly after the separation, which it might

have prevented had it existed before. For a good many years, however, the movement remained weak. It was literary and romantic in its beginnings, it could hardly be otherwise, since the people whose cause it pleaded still took little part in active politics. When that changed in Belgium as it did in the rest of Western Europe, when the masses were enfranchised, the Flemish Movement inevitably acquired a different character. It sought its justification no longer primarily in the idealisation of Flemish culture which it tried to save from extinction, but in the needs of the Flemish people, whose material as well as spiritual interests suffer as long as their language is not given full scope in administration, law, and especially, education. So the Flemish Movement has become a great social and democratic movement. And it has gained one victory after another, although French is still strongly entrenched in the official b u r e a u x, in the army, in the universities. The great semand of the Flemings, which is at this moment being discussed in the Belgian parliament, is the so-called Flemification of the University of Ghent. When that goes through, it will mean a most important stride in the liberation of Flemish civilisation. Already the growth of Flemish consciousness has led to an intensification of intellectual relations with Holland, such as at the time of the union was hardly possible. Flemish novelists and Flemish poets. . . before 1830 they did not exist, they were undreamt of, — at present Flemish literature can hold its own with Dutch. It is much read and much admired in Holland. Flemish scholarship also cultivates relations with the Northern brothers. All this makes for a greater independence with regard to France. From the attitude of the leaders of the 1830 revolution it is clear that Belgian nationality must in the long run have been swallowed by French, unless the Flemings were roused and determined to preserve their own character. The Flemish movement, in spite of the excesses of youthful extremists during the German occupation, of which no doubt you have heard, — the Flemish Movement is no danger for Belgium. It is on the contrary an essential condition for its existence. Only when it has worked through and the dignity of Flemish language and civilisation is safeguarded, can Belgium hold her own between Holland and France and fulfil the splendid task, which Professor Pirenne used to believe in, of mediating between the Latin and the Germanic civilisations.

We thus arrive at the curious conclusion that ever since the separation of 1830 the Dutch and the Belgians have been drawing closer together, and one is tempted to say that if the separation could only have been put off twenty or thirty years longer it would have never occurred at all. But I repeat that nobody is rash enough to build schemes of re-union on that proposition. Clearly, after a further century of independent existence the tradition of political dualism has become too strong for the Netherlands ever to be united again. Besides, political union appears unnecessary for strong bonds of friendship and of intellectual community to exist. Lord Reay, in his little speech after my first lecture, referred to the unfortunate dispute which has somewhat troubled the relations between Holland and Belgium during the past year, and he said we should not take it too tragically as it was no more than a quarrel between relatives and sure to be followed by a real reconciliation. I believe that Lord Reay was right. And one of the most encouraging phenomena has been the attitude of the Flemish press and of the leaders of Flemish opinion at a time when everybody, inside Belgium and out, was very excitable and when the most reckless campaign of vituperation against Holland was carried on. The Flemings did not allow themselves to be swept off their feet. They held the great object of good relations with Holland steadily in view, and it certainly is due very largely to them that Dutchmen can at this moment feel confident about the future of Belgo-Dutch friendship.

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THE NETHERLANDS
about 1550.
Regions belonging to the House of Burgundy in the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries.
Frontier of the German Empire.
Frontier between the French and Dutch languages.
Norwich
Yarmouth
Ipswich
Dover
Calais
Boulogne
Crecy
Amiens
Montdidier
Compiegne
Senlis
Soissons
Reims
Parijs
Chalons
Verdun
Metz
Sedan
Bouillon
Luxemburg
Arlon
Diedenhoven
Trier
Vianden
Neuenahr
Blankenheim
Montmedy
Stenay
Virton
Longwy
Thionville
Metz
Nancy
Toul
Commercy
Bar le Duc
Rethel
Vervins
Guise
Landrecies
Avesnes
Maubeuge
Mons
Valenciennes
Douay
Lille
Arras
St Pol
Abbeville
Montreuil
Boulogne
Calais
Gravelingen
Dunkerken
Nieuport
Ostende
Middelburg
Veere
Zierikzee
Sluis
Aardenburg
Damme
Brugge
Sas van Gent
Terneuzen
Hulst
Antwerpen
Mechelen
Brussel
Leuven
Tienen
Diest
Hasselt
Maastricht
Tongeren
Luik
Huy
Namen
Dinant
Givet
Charlemont
Philippeville
Marienbourg
Chimay
Avesnes
Landrecies
Cambray
Bapaume
Peronne
St Quentin
Ypren
Kortrijk
Oudenaarde
Gent
Dendermonde
Mechelen
Lier
Turnhout
Bergen op Zoom
Breda
Geertruidenberg
's Hertogenbosch
Tiel
Arnhem
Nijmegen
Kleef
Wesel
Venlo
Roermond
Thorn
Gulik
Aken
Duren
Bonn
Koelen
Elberfeld
Dortmund
Munster
Bredevoort
Lingen
Meppen
Coevorden
Steenwijk
Enkhuizen
Alkmaar
Haarlem
Amsterdam
Leiden
's Gravenhage
Delft
Rotterdam
Briele
Schouwen
Goes
Borsselen
Middelburg
Veere
Zierikzee
Sluis
Aardenburg
Damme
Brugge
Sas van Gent
Ostende
Dunkerken
Calais
Gravelingen
Dixmuiden
Cassel
Ypren
Kortrijk
Oudenaarde
Gent
Dendermonde
Mechelen
Lier
Antwerpen
Turnhout
Hulst

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