EDMUNDSON GEORGE

ANGLO-DUTCH RIVALRY DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

George Edmundson

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PREFACE

The varying fortunes of the obstinate and fiercely contested struggles with the Dutch for maritime and commercial supremacy in the days of the Commonwealth and the Restoration are familiar to all readers of English history, and especially of English naval history. Never did English seamen fight better than in these Dutch wars, and never did they meet more redoubtable foes. The details of the many dogged contests marked by alternate victory and defeat are now more or less unintelligible save to the expert in the naval strategy and tactics of the times, but legends have grown round the story of Martin Tromp sailing down the Channel with a broom at his mast-head, and of the

exploit of Michael de Ruyter in burning the English ships at Chatham, which are never likely to be forgotten. The names of these two famous seamen are probably better known to Englishmen than those of any of the contemporary English admirals save that of Robert Blake alone. This fact should bespeak for the attempt that is here made to trace the causes and the growth of the Anglo-Dutch rivalry at sea and in commerce, which culminated in the collision between Blake and Tromp off Dover on May 29, 1652, and the declaration of war that followed. It has been my object in these Ford Lectures to treat of the relations between England and the United Provinces during the half-century that preceded the first outbreak of hostilities, and to make it clear that these wars of 1652-4, 1665-7, 1672-4 were the inevitable outcome of a long-continued clashing of interests, which were of fundamental importance and indeed vital to the welfare of both nations.

The first half of the seventeenth century was one of the most critical periods in English history. In any account of the reigns of the first two sovereigns of the House of Stewart political and religious questions of primary significance thrust themselves into the foreground of a picture full of deepening dramatic interest, with the result that other questions, apparently subordinate but in reality closely bound up with the national destinies, have been either relegated to the background or wholly overlooked and neglected. It has been so in regard to the questions dealt with in these pages.

The history of the revolt of the Netherlands and of the rise of the Dutch Republic shows to us Englishmen and Dutchmen united by bonds of sympathy and fighting side by side against a common foe. To both alike the Spaniard and the Inquisition were hateful, and in shedding their blood freely for the cause of Dutch freedom Englishmen were in fact acting in their own self-defence against the ambitious projects of Philip II. At first sight then it appears strange that the conclusion of the truce for twelve years in 1609 should have been followed by a coolness and growing estrangement in the relations between the two countries, and by a series of endless bickerings, grievances, and disputes which all the resources of diplomacy in protracted negotiations proved unable to settle amicably to the satisfaction of both parties. The truth is that the very points of resemblance in the racial characteristics of the English and the Dutch brought them into collision in almost every part of the world. Born colonizers, traders, and explorers, each people was instinctively conscious that its destiny was upon the water, and that mastery of the seas was a necessity of national existence. Hence a rivalry which was unavoidable, inexorable, a rivalry which could eventually have only one of two issues, either the voluntary submission of one of the rivals to the other, or a trial of strength by ordeal of battle.

James I and Charles I, whatever the deficiencies and mistakes of their foreign policies, were not blind to the significance of the appearance of this new sea-power on the other side of the 'narrow seas', and were quick to recognize that the Dutch

menace to the essential interests of their island kingdom was at least as formidable as the Spanish menace had ever been. The diplomacy of both these kings was on the face of it vacillating, uncertain, and opportunist, but it is unjust to attribute this wholly to constitutional infirmity of purpose, or to an innate propensity to carry through their schemes by tortuous by-ways and dubious intrigues. There was no lack of steadfast determination on the part either of James or Charles in their resolute attempts to conduct the government and administration of their kingdoms autocratically without that adequate financial aid which Parliament alone could grant. But in consequence their treasury was generally empty, and it is therefore not surprising that, confronted with the constant fear of imminent bankruptcy, they were compelled to be shifty in their dealings with foreign powers, and to work for the achievement of their ends by the processes of a devious diplomacy rather than risk the costly charges of an appeal to arms. Nevertheless it will be seen that in their negotiations with the United Provinces never for a single moment would either James or Charles make the slightest concession in regard to the claims of the British Crown to undisputed sovereignty 'in the narrow seas', and they insisted that every foreign vessel should recognize that sovereignty by striking its flag when meeting a British war-ship in those waters.

The period with which I am dealing was one of chartered companies, of trade monopolies, and of commercial protection in its most aggressive form. Probably at that stage in the world's

history no other economical system was conceivable or would have proved workable. In any case most of the disputes and differences between the English and the Dutch at this time arose from questions connected with trading privileges, and these lectures contain much concerning them. It is still, however, extremely interesting and not without instruction to read the arguments that were used and the principles that were upheld by these statesmen and diplomatists of former days. Economical questions are always with us, and men's opinions differ now as to their right solution as much as they did three centuries ago.

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I: 1600-1610

The last two decades of the sixteenth century hold a place apart in English History. The exploits of the great Elizabethan seamen helped to shatter the supremacy of Spain upon the sea, but they did more than this. They aroused in the English people the instinct of their true destiny, as a maritime, trading, and colonizing power. The granting of Charters to the Eastland (Baltic) Company (1579), to the Levant Company (1581), to the Guinea Company (1588), the foundation of the great East India Company (1600), the opening out by the Muscovy Company of a new trade route to Persia by way of Astrachan, the daring efforts to discover a North-West and a North-East passage to Cathay and the Indies, the first attempts to erect colonies in Virginia and Newfoundland, all testify to the spirit of enterprise which animated the nation, a spirit whose many-sided activity never failed to command the Queen's sympathy and encouragement. In thus entering, however, upon that path of colonial and commercial expansion which in later times was to become world-wide, the Englishman found himself in the first half of the seventeenth century confronted by a more formidable rival than the Spaniard. The defeat of the Invincible Armada was followed[1] by the rise of a new Sea-Power. At the opening of the

[1] See the admirable monograph on the subject by the late Professor Robert Fruin, *Tien Jaren uit de Tachtigjarigen Oorlog, 1588-98.*

seventeenth century the Dutch Republic had not only succeeded in resisting all the efforts made for its subjugation to Spanish rule, but, after more than thirty years of continuous and desperate struggle, was thriving in the midst of war. In the course of that struggle much help had been given, both in money and men, by Elizabeth. But the English Queen was not for many years whole-hearted in her support. She saw in the revolt of the Netherlands a means for draining the resources of a dangerous adversary. It was no small relief to her that the coast lying opposite to the mouth of the Thames, with its many ports and hardy sea-faring population, should no longer be at the disposal of the master of the strongest navy in the world. She felt a certain amount of sympathy with the Dutch on religious grounds, but a sympathy tempered by political considerations, and strictly subordinated to them. To support the rebellion of subjects against their legitimate ruler was to the instincts of the Tudor Queen a course which only necessity could justify. Hence her repeated refusal of the proffered sovereignty, her niggardly aid, her temporizing and apparently capricious attitude. As a matter of fact, throughout this critical period of her reign the policy of Elizabeth was not governed either by sentiment or by caprice. She always kept steadily in view the welfare and the security of England, with whose interests those of her own throne were identified, and she held aloof from entanglements which might be dangerous to the safety of her kingdom. Not until after the assassination of William the Silent, followed by the success of Parma in capturing

Antwerp, August, 1585, did she make reply to the threatening attitude of Spain by openly taking sides with the rebel provinces. Still refusing the sovereignty, she sent Leicester at the head of a strong body of English troops to act in her name, as Governor-General, at the same time characteristically bargaining that the seaports Flushing and Brill with the fort of Rammekens should be delivered to her in pledge for the repayment of her costs. The mission of Leicester was a failure, whether it be regarded from the military or the political standpoint, but it gave the Dutch at a transition period of disorganization and pressing peril a disciplined force to assist in their defence, and a breathing space for recuperation.

The resignation of his post by Leicester (April, 1588) may be taken as the date at which the history of the United Netherlands as a self-governing State really begins. The treaty with England still subsisted by the terms of which the Commander of the English auxiliary troops with two colleagues had seats in the Council of State, but the Council of State ceased ere long to have any but executive functions. The conduct of affairs affecting the whole Union was vested in the States-General as representing the States of the seven sovereign provinces from which its authority was derived. A more cumbrous system of government than that under which the United Provinces were now to develop rapidly into a powerful and flourishing State, probably never existed. That it was workable was due to two facts. The voices of the provinces were nominally of equal weight

in the States-General, in reality that of Holland was dominant. Holland contributed 60 per cent. of the general expenses and contained about one-half of the entire population of the Union. With Zeeland she furnished almost the whole of the navy and was already becoming one of the most thriving centres of commerce in the world. At this time the influence of an exceptionally able statesman, John van Oldenbarneveldt, who filled the office of Advocate of Holland, was supreme in the States of that province, and as their representative and spokesman he was able to exercise an authority in the States-General which placed for thirty years in his hands the general administration of the country and the control of foreign affairs. By his side stood Maurice of Nassau, respected and honoured as the son of William the Silent, wielding as Captain and Admiral-General authority over all the armed forces of the Republic, and exercising as Stadholder of five provinces large executive powers. A consummate general but no politician, Maurice was content to leave the business of administration and the conduct of diplomacy in the hands of the statesman who had been his father's friend. Thus by the efforts of these two men, each eminent in his separate sphere, the youthful Republic, despite the inherent weaknesses of a confederacy so loosely compacted as that of the United Provinces, was able to carry out a wise and consistent foreign policy, to defend its borders, and meanwhile to thrive and flourish.

The relations between England and the States required the most careful handling during the whole of the period that

intervened between the return of Leicester and the death of Elizabeth. The assistance given by the English Queen had not been without a return: it had been fully repaid by the services rendered by the Dutch fleet during the spring and summer of 1588 in blockading the ports in which lay the transports collected by the Duke of Parma for the invasion of England. When the Armada entered the Channel, Parma with his splendid veteran army was thus compelled to remain a helpless spectator of events, unable to take any part in promoting the success of the great enterprise which Philip had been so long preparing. But Elizabeth had been piqued by the opposition that Leicester had encountered, and by the evident determination of the States, under the leadership of Holland, not to permit any interference on the part of the representative of a foreign power with their provincial rights and privileges. She did not withdraw her help, but it was given from motives of pure self-interest rather than from any love for the cause she was supporting, and in a huckstering spirit. With her it was a question of give and take, and the military successes of Maurice, accompanied as they were by the rapid growth of commercial prosperity in Holland and Zeeland, only encouraged her to drive a harder bargain in her negotiations and to press for repayment of the loans she had advanced.

In these circumstances friction in the relations between England and the Republic was at times inevitable, but the community of interests was so strong that friendly co-operation

never ceased. An English contingent took part in the campaigns of Maurice; a powerful Dutch squadron sailed with the fleet of Essex to the sack of Cadiz in 1595. The conclusion of peace between France and Spain in May, 1598, brought about a fresh treaty between England and the United Provinces, the terms of which point clearly to the great change which had taken place in the relative position of the two States since the time of Leicester's mission. The Dutch were now in a position to promise the repayment of their debt to Elizabeth by equal annual instalments[2] and to undertake in case of a Spanish attack upon England to come to the assistance of their allies with thirty ships of war and a force of 5,000 infantry and five cornets of cavalry. On the other hand, only one Englishman henceforth was to have a seat upon the Council of State, and the English auxiliary troops in the Netherlands were transferred to the service of the States as their paymasters and were required to take an oath of allegiance to them. This English brigade in the Dutch service, now first formed, was to have a long and honourable career. It was speedily to prove its worth and gain immortal fame by the share that it took in winning the great victory of Nieuwport (July 2, 1600), and in the heroic defence of Ostend (1601-4).

Such was the state of things when James I ascended the English throne. From him the Netherlands could hope for little active aid. The chief aim of James's policy from the

[2] The towns of Flushing and Brill and the fort of Rammekens were delivered into the hands of Elizabeth, as security for repayment.

first was to live on friendly terms with Spain, and in 1604 he concluded a treaty of peace with Philip III and with the Archdukes, as sovereigns of the Netherlands. His attitude to the United Provinces was not indeed unfriendly. He still retained the cautionary towns, as a pledge for the debt, and his representative sat in the Council of State, but as one of the conditions of peace he promised to lend no assistance to the Dutch. The privilege of recruiting in England for the regiments in their service was not withdrawn, but in return a like privilege was extended to the Spaniards. Thus there were occasions on which Englishmen were found fighting against one another on opposite sides. The Court of Madrid on their part, exhausted by the long and costly struggle, were already in 1606 making tentative proposals to the rebel provinces for the conclusion of a peace or truce, and meanwhile spared no efforts to prejudice the mind of James against a people for whose cause as a stanch Protestant it was feared he might have secret leanings, and at the same time to secure his benevolent support in the coming negotiations. The arguments that were used and their effect upon the King are well summed up in the words of the keen-eyed Venetian Ambassador, Nicolò Molin, who in 1607 thus reports: —

> 'The Spaniards are ceaselessly urging upon the King that for his own interests he ought to use his utmost endeavours in this negotiation in order to bring it to some conclusion, since by continuance of the war the Dutch might come to make themselves masters of those seas. Having their fleets

ordinarily of a hundred or more ships, and these widely scattered in different places, they can thus say, and with truth, that they are masters of those seas for the possession of which the ancient kings of England have made very long and very costly wars against the princes of Europe. The King knows all this to be true, but is likewise of opinion that at a single nod of his the Dutch would yield to him all that dominion that they have gained; which without doubt would follow so long as the war with the Spaniards lasted, since they are not able at one and the same time to contend with two of the greatest princes of Christendom. But if with time that ripens affairs peace should be effected between them and the Crown of Spain, I do not know if they would be so ready to yield as the King of England promises himself; since just as this profession of the sea is manifestly more and more on the wane in England, so more and more is it increasing and acquiring force and vigour among the Dutch.'

The perspicacity of this review of the situation was completely justified by the events. On April 9, 1609, after prolonged and acrimonious negotiations, a treaty for a truce of twelve years between the belligerents was signed, but on conditions imposed by the Dutch. To the Spaniards the terrible drain on their resources made a respite from war a matter not of choice, but of necessity. To obtain it they had to treat with the United Provinces 'as if they were an independent State', and, worst of all, they had by a secret clause to concede liberty of trading in the Indies. From this moment the relations of the States with England were

sensibly changed. The attitude of King James had hitherto been a mixture of condescension and aloofness, and he had not troubled himself to consider seriously the question of Dutch rivalry upon the seas and in commerce, which had so profoundly impressed the Venetian envoy. Nicolò Molin was in 1607 undoubtedly correct in his supposition that at that date James still looked upon the Dutch as dependents on his favour, who would not venture to run counter to any expression of his will. The course of the negotiations for the truce must have gradually undeceived him, and their issue left him face to face with a power compelled to maintain to the utmost the interests of the extensive commerce on the proceeds of which its very existence as a State depended.

No sooner were the signatures appended to the treaty than James took a step which exposed to a very severe strain his relations with the people whose emancipation from Spanish rule he had, ostensibly at least, worked hard to accomplish. Many indeed in Holland had been suspicious of the real friendliness of his attitude during the negotiations, but very few probably imagined that he was preparing, as soon as they were ended, to put to the test their sense of the value of his services and of his alliance by striking a deadly blow at the most important of their industries. On May 16, 1609, the King issued a proclamation, in which, after stating that though he had hitherto tolerated the promiscuous liberty that had been granted to foreigners to fish in the British seas, he has now determined, seeing that this liberty

> 'hath not only given occasion of over great

> Encroachments upon our Regalities, or rather questioning of our Right, but hath been a means of daily Wrongs to our own People that exercise the Trade of Fishing … to give notice to all the World that our express Pleasure is, that from the beginning of the Month of August next coming, no Person of what Nation or Quality soever, be permitted to fish upon any of our Coasts and Seas of Great Britain, Ireland and the rest of the Isles adjacent, until they have orderly demanded and obtain'd Licences from us…'

The news of the publication of this edict caused in Holland no small surprise, not unmingled with indignation. On June 12 the matter was discussed in the States of that Province, and it was resolved[3] that the States-General be requested to adopt measures for the vigorous defence of the land's rights as based upon the treaties. The States-General on their part resolved[4] that a full inquiry should be made into the question of treaty rights and a special embassy be sent to London, and as early as July 6, King James agreed[5] to receive such a deputation, and to appoint commissioners to enter into conference with it on the subject of the privileges and immunities for freedom of commerce claimed in virtue of ancient treaties. Meanwhile the States-General promised the fishermen their protection, at the same time bidding them to be very careful not to give any cause for new complaints on the part of the King. So far indeed were

[3] Res. Holl. June 12, 1609.

[4] Res. St. – Gen. June 12, 1609.

[5] Art. 6 of the Treaty between James and the States, July 6 (June 25, 1609, o.s.).

the Dutch from yielding immediate submission to the demand of James, or from admitting its justice, that Sir Ralph Winwood (the resident English ambassador at the Hague), reporting to the Secretary of State, Lord Salisbury, the results of an interview he had had with Oldenbarneveldt September 16, 1609, informs him: —

> 'the States do write expressly to their ambassador [Noel Caron] urging him to advertise his Majesty their purpose to send to beseech him upon the necessity of this affair [i.e. liberty of fishing] in the meantime to have patience with their people trading upon his coast that without impeachment they may use *their accustomed Liberty and antient Privelidges*; which he [Oldenbarneveldt] said they were so far from fear that his Majesty upon due consideration will abridge, as that they hope he will be pleased to inlarge and increase into new ones.'[6]

For a right understanding of the importance of the fisheries question and of the reasons which led King James at this particular time to issue his proclamation, a short retrospect is necessary.

Special rights of free fishing in English waters had been granted to the Hollanders and Zeelanders, as early as 1295, by King Edward I, and afterwards renewed by several of his successors. Finally a treaty was concluded, dated February 24, 1496, known as the *Magnus Intercursus*, between Henry VII

[6] Winwood, *Memorials*, vol. iii.

and Philip the Fair, Duke of Burgundy, which was destined to regulate the commercial relations between England and the Netherlands during the whole of the Tudor period, and was still in force in 1609. Article XIV of this treaty ran as follows: —

> 'Conventum, concordatum et conclusum est quod Piscatores utriusque Partis Partium praedictarum (cujuscunque conditionis existant) poterunt ubique Ire, Navigare per Mare, secure Piscari absque aliquo Impedimento, Licentia, seu Salvo Conductu.'

Nothing could be more explicit or complete, and it was to this clause of the *Magnus Intercursus* and the rights it had so long recognized that Oldenbarneveldt referred when he spoke to Winwood of the Dutch fishermen's 'accustomed Liberty and antient Privelidges.'

The rights of the Netherlanders to trade and navigate in Scottish waters, 'sine aliquo salvo conductu aut licentia generali aut speciali', were guaranteed by the Treaty of Binche, dated December 15, 1550, which had been confirmed by James himself, as King of Scotland, in 1594. But neither in this treaty of 1550, nor in an earlier treaty of 1541 to which it expressly refers, '*circa Piscationem et liberum usum Maris, ea quae per Tractatum anno 1541* … inita, conclusa ac conventa fuerint debite ac sincere observari debebunt', is there any definite statement that the free use of the sea carried with it the right to fish without payment, though undoubtedly that right seems to be implied, and was certainly exercised without let or hindrance before 1609.

The question at issue was of vital consequence to the Dutch. It may be asserted without any exaggeration that the commerce and prosperity of Holland and Zeeland had been built upon the herring fishery, and rested upon it. The discovering of the art of curing the herring by Willem Beukelsz at the close of the fourteenth century had transformed a perishable article of local consumption into a commodity for traffic and exchange. Soon the 'great fishery', as it was called, afforded, directly or indirectly, occupation and a means of livelihood to a large part of the entire population of the Province of Holland.[7] Not only did many thousands of Hollanders put out to sea to follow the track of the herring shoals along the British coasts, but thousands more found employment on shore in building the busses, pinks, and other boats engaged in the lucrative industry, and in providing them with ropes, nets, and other necessaries. The profit from the fishery alone before the outbreak of the revolt was estimated by Guicciardini at 500,000 Flemish pounds. But such an estimate was far from representing the real value of what was styled by the States-General in an official document 'one of the chiefest mines of the United Netherlands'.[8] Salt was required for the curing. It was brought in Dutch bottoms in its rough state from French and Spanish ports, or direct from Punta

[7] The Zeelanders in the seventeenth century, though they sent out many fishermen to the Dogger Bank, to Greenland and Spitzbergen, did not take much part in the herring fishery. See note.

[8] Groot Placaet-Boek (July 19, 1606).

del Rey on the coast of Venezuela, and salt-refineries quickly sprang up at Enkhuysen, Hoorn, and other fishing centres. In a land which had no natural products, the cured herrings and the refined salt which were not required for home use served as articles of commerce, and freights were dispatched to the neighbouring lands but specially to the Baltic to be exchanged for corn, timber, hemp, and other 'Eastland' commodities. The enterprising Hollanders and Zeelanders, at first competed with the Hanse towns in the Baltic ports, but long before the opening of the seventeenth century had practically driven their rivals from the field, and at the time with which we are dealing it has been computed that no less than 3,000 Dutch vessels were engaged in the 'Eastland' traffic through the Sound. The corn in its turn brought by so vast a fleet far more than sufficed even for the needs of a country where no corn was grown. Some thousands of other ships laden with grain voyaged along the coast of France, the Peninsula and the Western Mediterranean, discharging their cargoes and returning with freights of wine, silk, olive oil, and other staple products of the South. The Spaniards and Portuguese were in fact largely dependent upon the Hollanders for their necessary food supplies, and these keen traders had no scruples in enriching themselves at the cost of their foes. An abundance of timber and hemp also came from the Baltic and furnished the raw material for flourishing shipbuilding and ropemaking industries. Sawmills sprang up on the banks of the Zaan, and before long Zaandam became the chief centre of the timber trade

of Europe. It will thus be seen at once how many Dutch interests were involved in the full maintenance of the rights to free fishing on the British coasts guaranteed by treaty, and why it was that the States-General under pressure from the States of Holland should have determined to send a special embassy to protest strongly and firmly against the edict of King James, and should have meantime promised the fishermen their protection in case of any attempt being made to compel them by armed force to pay the licences.

The step taken by King James had, however, from the English point of view much to recommend it. The English people saw the growing maritime strength and rapidly increasing commercial prosperity of the Dutch with jealous eyes. Their practical monopoly of the British fisheries was deeply resented. Pamphlets were written lamenting the decadence of English shipping and trade.[9] It was felt that the ancient claim of England to the sovereignty and dominion of the narrow seas was being challenged, and that its maintenance depended upon the numbers and the experience of the sea-faring population, for whom the fisheries were the best and most practical school. A petition is extant from the fishermen of the Cinque Ports to the King,

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[9] *A Pollitique Platt*, by Robert Hitchcock, 1580.*Observations made upon the Dutch fishery about the year 1601*, by John Keymer. Ralegh, *Works*, i. 144.Sir Thomas Overbury's observations in his travels in 1609: *Harleian Misc.* viii. 349.Discourse addressed to the King by Sir Nicholas Hales, on the benefit derived by the Dutch from English fisheries. Terms suggested for granting them a licence to fish for twenty-one years. *Calendar of State Papers, Dom. Ser., 1603-10*, p. 509.

showing that the Netherlanders drive them from their fishing, and sell fresh fish contrary to the laws, and beseeching His Majesty to impose on them a tax of fifteen shillings upon every last of fish, the same as they imposed on the English.[10] James was far from indisposed to listen to their complaints. Early in his reign, in 1604, an attempt had been made to enforce the eating of fish in England on fast-days, and the motive of it was plainly stated. It had little to do with religious observances. It was 'for the better increase of Seamen, to be readie at all times to serve in the Kings Majesties Navie, of which the fishermen of England have euer been the chiefest Seminarie and Nurserie.'[11] The suggestion that licences should be required for which a tax or toll should be paid naturally presented itself to the King, at this time in sore straits for money and at his wit's end how to obtain it, as a welcome expedient. It also afforded a means by which the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the British King in the British seas could be asserted and his regalities safeguarded.[12] The large revenue derived by Christian IV of Denmark from the tolls in the Sound had no doubt often made the impecunious James envious of his brother-in-law, whose right to levy such an import in Danish waters differed in no way from the right, which as King of Great Britain and Ireland he was now asserting, to demand a licence from all foreigners who desired to fish on

[10] *Cal. State Papers, Dom. Ser., 1603-10*, p. 509.

[11] *Statutes of the Realm*, iv. 2, p. 1058.

[12] Letter of Salisbury to Cornwallis, June 8, 1609. Winwood's *State Papers*, iii. 44-50.

the British coasts. His decision to issue the proclamation was confirmed by the appearance in March, 1609, of the famous treatise of Hugo Grotius, entitled *Mare Liberum*. The argument in this work seemed to be directed against the principle of a *dominium maris* such as the English Kings had claimed for centuries in the 'narrow seas', and its publication at this time aroused the resentment of James, always tenaciously jealous of any infringement of his sovereign prerogatives. As a matter of fact, as has been shown by the late Professor Robert Fruin[13], the *Mare Liberum* was originally a chapter of a larger unpublished work of Grotius, written to prove that the Portuguese had no exclusive rights in the Indian Ocean but that the Eastern seas and all others were open to the traders of every nation. The most burning question in the negotiations for the twelve years' truce, then just drawing to a close, had been that of the liberty to trade in the Indies, demanded with insistence by the Dutch, refused up to the very last peremptorily by the Spanish King, and conceded by him finally not directly but by a kind of subterfuge. The *Mare Liberum* of Grotius saw the light at a time when it was hoped that his learned arguments might tend to allay the acuteness of the dispute by showing the reasonableness and legality of the position taken up by the Dutch. It is clear now that these arguments, though their application was general, had their special reference to Portuguese and not to British pretensions. Curiously enough, as will be seen later, it was in the long succession of Anglo-Dutch

[13] Fruin's *Verspreide Geschriften*, vol. iii, pp. 408-45.

negotiations over the fisheries in the seas over which the Crown of England claimed paramount sovereignty and jurisdiction that the thesis put forward by the author of the *Mare Liberum* was destined to be the source of embittered controversy. The acute mind of King James was quick in grasping its importance.

Delayed by various causes, it was not till April 16, 1610, that the embassy from the States set sail from Brill for England. The object of the mission was ostensibly a complimentary one – to thank the King for the active part he had taken, as a mediator, in bringing the truce negotiations to a favourable issue. The two matters which called for serious discussion were: (1) the critical situation which had arisen in the Jülich-Cleves Duchies owing to a disputed succession; (2) the proclamation about the fisheries. The importance of the last question was revealed by the fact that all the five envoys originally selected were representatives of the two maritime provinces. One of the five died at Brill just before starting. The four who actually sailed (April 16) were: Johan Berck, pensionary of Dort; Albert de Veer, pensionary of Amsterdam; Elias van Oldenbarneveldt, pensionary of Rotterdam; and a Zeelander, Albert Joachimi, who was later to show himself a skilful diplomatist during the twenty-five years that he was resident Dutch ambassador in London. Elias van Oldenbarneveldt was the brother of the Advocate of Holland. According to a letter from Sir Ralph Winwood[14] to Lord Salisbury he had special charge of the fishery question,

[14] Winwood's *Memorials*, March 16, (o.s.), 1610. See also letter of April 6 (o.s.).

a proof of the peculiar interest felt by the Advocate in the issue raised. With them was joined the resident ambassador, Noel Caron. Their instructions required them to seek from His Majesty an explanation of his intentions in the proclamation, 'since their High Mightinesses the States-General could not believe that he meant to include the inhabitants of the United Netherlands among those who were bidden to pay for a licence to fish, since this was contrary to the ancient treaties subsisting between them and the Crowns of England and Scotland. After audiences with the King (April 27) and with the Privy Council (May 8), it was arranged that a Conference on the fisheries question should be held, with a Committee of the Council, two of whose members were Sir Julius Caesar, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Sir Thomas Parry, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The Conference opened on May 16, and the points in dispute were argued at length. The Dutch case was presented in a memorandum drawn up with much skill, probably by the hand of Hugo Grotius himself. The freedom of fishing was claimed on two grounds: (1) that of the privileges granted by ancient treaties still in force; (2) that of abstract right, because the sea, like the air, is for the common use of all and cannot be private property. The weak point of the case lay in the fact that these two grounds, that of treaty right and that of the *Mare Liberum*, seemed to be in a certain sense contradictory. The English, however, would not admit that the question of the immemorial claim of the Kings of England to sovereignty and jurisdiction in the seas adjoining

the British coasts was open to discussion, and seizing upon the argument placed in their hands by the Dutch memorandum itself, pleaded with great force that the granting of privileges implied the power to take them away or modify them, should the King deem such a step necessary to protect the interests of his own subjects. The Conference therefore effected nothing more than the bringing out in relief of the differences of view of the two parties. But reflection brought wisdom. There was no wish on either side to press matters to extremities. Already on May 10 the States-General, unwilling to run the risk of making James an enemy, at a time when they were very anxious to secure his help in the settlement of the Jülich-Cleves succession question[15], had sent instructions to their ambassadors not to make difficulties or unpleasantness about the fisheries, but rather to propose that the execution of the proclamation should be postponed for two years, in order that the question might be thoroughly investigated. There were several claimants to the Jülich-Cleves inheritance, Protestant and Catholic, and it was of vital importance to the States, and also to a lesser extent to all Protestant princes in Germany and to James, that this frontier territory on the Rhine should not fall under the rule of a Catholic sovereign. But the Archduke Leopold had seized the fortress of Jülich, and Henry IV of France, jealous of the power of the House of Habsburg in Europe, had put himself at the head of a coalition to secure the succession to the Elector of Brandenburg, and William, Count

[15] See Note C.

Palatine of Neuburg, as joint possessors. There was a general desire to avoid hostilities, but Henry IV had pushed forward his preparations for a great campaign, and war seemed inevitable. At this moment the assassination of the French king at the very time the Conference was being held in London changed the whole aspect of affairs. The new French Government was favourably disposed to Spain. The Dutch therefore were left face to face with the task of expelling the Archduke from Jülich, and they felt that all other matters were for the moment of secondary importance to that of having the friendly co-operation of James in case of the outbreak of war. Their attitude to the fisheries question was therefore considerably modified. It became much more conciliatory, and for precisely similar reasons a like change took place in the attitude of the English King. He too felt that the friendship of the Dutch was essential to him at such a critical juncture, and at a meeting with the Earls of Salisbury and Northampton, May 24, the Dutch envoys were agreeably surprised to find that the King, while not formally abating one jot of his sovereign rights in the matter of issuing licences for fishing, was willing to postpone the execution of his edict for two years. The ambassadors took leave of the King the same day and started on their return journey. Of this audience the Lords of the Council, in a letter to Winwood, dated May 18, 1610 (o.s.), write:

> 'For the States Ambassadors, His Majesty is now dismissing them with sufficient assurance of his inward

affections towards them and the preservation of their State, which next to his own he holdeth most dear above all other respects in the world. And as for the matter of fishing and Reglement of commerce, His Majesty thinketh not fit now to spend any more time in it, but to refer the one and the other to some better season; and in the meanwhile that things may remain in the same state as now they are. So as we conceive these Deputies will return with good contentment, having no other cause either for the public or for the private; and His Majesty having also been careful to give them the rights that appertain to their title, and all other external courtesy and honour in their reception.'

This good understanding was to bear good fruit. The army, which Maurice of Nassau led into the duchy in June, contained a fine body of English troops under the command of Sir Edward Cecil. Jülich was besieged and surrendered to the Dutch on September 1, and the Archduke Leopold was compelled to leave the territory. Of this achievement Sir Ralph Winwood, writing to Lord Salisbury from Dusseldorf, August 22 (o.s.), says: 'The honor of the conduct of this seige no man will detract from the Count Maurice, who is the *Maistre-ouvrier* in that *Mestier*. But that this Seige hath had so happy an end, himself will and doth attribute it to the Diligence and Judgement of Sir Edward Cecil.' The capture of Jülich did not indeed end this thorny little dispute. Anglo-Dutch and Spanish-Imperial armies, under Maurice and Spinola respectively, manœuvred within a short distance of one another. But the quarrel was localized, no further hostilities took

place, and finally by the Treaty of Xanten, November 12, 1614, an arrangement was arrived at. During all this time the relations between James and the States were friendly. The King, however, had quarrelled with his Parliament, and even had he wished to take a stronger line in foreign politics, lack of funds compelled him to temporize. The English contingent in Maurice's army was recruited indeed in England, but the troops were in the pay of the States. Moreover, James was all the time hankering after a Spanish marriage for the Prince of Wales, from mixed motives doubtless, but chiefly from a misguided notion that such an alliance between the leading Catholic and the leading Protestant State would enable him to play the part of arbiter in the religious differences which were dividing Europe into two hostile camps, and by his influence to prevent an actual breach of the peace. This was the underlying motive which prompted all the apparent fluctuations of his policy. Hence the persistence with which for so many years he pursued the *chimaera* of a Spanish match, while at the same time he allowed his only daughter to marry the Elector Palatine, the head of the Protestant Union in Germany, and endeavoured to maintain good relations with the United Provinces, notwithstanding the continual friction between his subjects and the Dutch regarding the increasing monopoly by the latter of the fisheries and of sea-borne trade. The situation in 1611 is thus described by the Venetian, Marcantonio Correr[16]: —

'With the lords of the United Provinces of the Low

[16] *Relazioni venete*, *Inghilterra*, serie iv, p. 128.

Countries, there exists at present perfect friendship and union; formerly he [James] used to despise them, as rebels, but now he loves and esteems them, as princes of valour and quality, an effect of the truce made with the Catholic king… Now H.M. desires and procures the preservation of the Dutch, but not a further increase of their greatness, since their forces on sea are not inferior to those of any potentate whatsoever, because that in time of war necessity has been their best mistress. Of these forces the English are not without some jealousy, seeing their own diminished, and the dominion of the sea, that they have been accustomed to hold in that part of the ocean transferred to others… In the herring fishery alone they [the Dutch] send out every year to the east coast of the Kingdom of England 1,700 vessels, in which perhaps 30,000 men are employed.[17] After the truce the King made a proclamation, that no one was allowed to fish in those parts without licence, perhaps incited by the great sums of money, that formerly the Spaniards offered Queen Elizabeth to have the user of it; but just as at that time that scheming did not succeed in despoiling the Dutch, so now these with two special ambassadors have not obtained any promise of an alteration, as he [the King] is always intent upon the conservation of his jurisdiction and the increase of the royal incomings. The King at present regards the possession of such great sea power as being in itself of great moment for the needs of England, and united with his own it could with difficulty be resisted. He holds further that these same provinces are a barrier rampart of

[17] See Note A.

his kingdoms, and he is interested in them through the debt of a million and a half of gold that remains to him of the sum of more than two millions already lent by Queen Elizabeth, the repayment of which is at present spread over a number of years, a portion every year. Meanwhile three principal places are pledges in the hands of his Majesty…'

The possession of these fortresses was indeed at this time placing King James in a position of no small advantage in his dealings with the States, and he was well aware of it. On the other hand, it was galling to the Dutch, now that they had compelled the Spaniard to treat with the United Provinces as if it were an independent State, to feel that two chief doors of entrance into their land were in the hands of foreign garrisons. James professed to be their good friend, and it appeared to be his interest to cultivate their alliance, but it was inevitable that his assiduous advances to gain the goodwill of Spain and to obtain the hand of an Infanta for his son should render him suspect.

II: 1610-1618

The resolve of the King in 1610 to postpone any action in the matter of his proclamation on the fisheries question seems not to have aroused any popular expression of disapproval. The English people were from the political and religious standpoint well disposed to the Dutch. What they suspected and dreaded was the King's obvious leaning to Spain. Their intense dislike to the Spanish marriage, concerning which it was common knowledge that negotiations were on foot, led them to favour a good understanding with the United Provinces. But the spectacle of the growing Dutch monopoly of the carrying trade, and the decline of English commerce in the face of these formidable rivals, could not fail before long to stir public opinion.

A succession of noteworthy pamphlets drew attention to the subject. Foremost among these, from the personality of the writer, was Ralegh's[18] *Observations touching trade and commerce with the Hollanders and others, wherein is proved that our sea and land commodities serve to enrich and strengthen other countries than our own*. These *Observations* were, as the title page informs us, presented to King James, and there are indications that the date of their presentation was about the time of the Dutch embassy of 1610. Their object was to show how Dutch trade was

[18] Ralegh's *Works*, viii. 351-76.

prospering at the expense of that of England. Ralegh pointed out in particular the immense profit derived by the Hollanders from their fishing in the British seas, and he asks why 'this great sea-business of fishing' should not be kept in English hands, and suggests that the King should appoint Commissioners to inquire into the matter, and 'forthwith set forward some scheme for preventing foreigners from reaping all the fruits of this lucrative industry on his Majesty's coasts.' He warns the King that 'the Hollanders possess already as many ships as eleven kingdoms, England being one of them', and expresses his conviction that 'they [the Hollanders] hoped to get the whole trade and shipping of Christendom into their own hands, as well for transportation, as otherwise for the command and mastery of the seas.'

Ralegh's pamphlet did not affect the King's decision to defer, for political reasons, taking any active steps concerning the fisheries, but we may well believe that the hint about 'the command and mastery of the seas' would not pass unheeded. It touched a question about which James was peculiarly sensitive. That question, though for a few years apparently dormant, was one that neither King nor people could afford to disregard. The command of the sea – then as at all times – was vital to an island power. The English were beginning to see in the Dutch not merely competitors in trade, who were ousting them from every market, but possible rivals for the dominion even of those 'narrow seas[19]' in which the Kings of England had so long claimed to

[19] See Note B.

have paramount sovereignty and jurisdiction. Thus a feeling of dissatisfaction and resentment gathered head which found vent, as was the custom of those days, in political pamphlet-writing. Two of these pamphlets[20], no less than that of Ralegh, call for particular notice, for they are full of material bearing upon the subject of the relations between the English and Dutch at the time of their publication, and throwing light upon the causes of the growing estrangement between the two people.

England's Way to win Wealth, by Tobias Gentleman, Fisherman and Mariner, bears the date 1614. The purpose of the writer is thoroughly practical. He sets out in great detail the statistics of the fisheries on the British coasts, and of the immense profits derived by the Hollanders from the pursuit of this industry, and he then proceeds to urge upon his countrymen to take a lesson from the foreigners, and not to neglect, as they are doing, a source of wealth which lies at their very doors. The following quotation is a good specimen of the homely vigour and directness of Gentleman's arguments; it will be seen that here, as throughout the pamphlet, they profess to be based on his own personal experience: —

> 'What their [the Hollanders] chiefest trade is, or their principal gold mine is well known to all merchants, that have used those parts, and to myself and all fishermen; namely, that his Majesty's seas is their chiefest, principal, and only rich treasury whereby they have so long maintained

[20] See Note.

> their wars, and have so greatly prospered and enriched themselves. If their little country of the United Provinces can do this (as is most manifest before our eyes they do) then what may we, his Majesty's subjects, do, if this trade of fishing were once erected among us, we having, in our own countries, sufficient store of all necessaries to accomplish the like business?.. And shall we neglect so great blessings, O slothful England and careless countrymen! Look but on these fellows, that we call the plump Hollanders, behold their diligence in fishing and our own careless negligence.'[21]

Another pamphlet, *The Trades Increase*[22], was of wider scope. It was directly inspired, as its anonymous author J. R. informs us, by the reading of *England's Way to win Wealth*. It deals not only with the question of the fisheries, but of shipping and trade generally, and rightly with shipping first of all. 'As concerning ships,' J. R. writes – and how true do his words ring in an Englishman's ears to-day – 'by these in a manner we live, the kingdom is, the King reigneth… If we want ships, we are dissolved.' As Gentleman's pamphlet is valuable for its detailed statistics of the fishing industry of the Hollanders, even more so is that of J. R. for its broad survey of and comparison between the Dutch and English trade in every part of the world. From country to country and sea to sea in all branches of commerce he shows how the English are being driven out by their more enterprising competitors.

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[21] *Harleian Misc.* iii, pp. 397-8.

[22] *Ibid.* iv, pp. 212-31.

> 'In consequence want of employment is breeding discontents and miseries, while the means for remedying threatened disaster are in our own hands, the place our own seas and within his Majesty's dominions.'

Nor is J. R. content with mere assertion. Basing his arguments on those of Gentleman, he proceeds to set forth how by the encouragement of English fishing

> 'we shall repair our Navy, breed seamen abundantly, enrich the subject, advance the King's custom, and assure the Kingdom, and all this out of fishing and especially out of herrings.'

As to the Hollanders, he remarks significantly: —

> 'Howsoever it pleaseth his Majesty to allow of his royal predecessor's bounty, in tolerating the neighbour nations to fish in his streams, yet other princes take more straight courses.'

This powerful and reasoned summary of a condition of affairs so threatening to England's supremacy as a maritime power, and to the welfare of her people, testifies to the mixture of indignation and alarm with which the English people regarded the rapid progress in commerce and wealth of 'their neighbours the new Sea-Herrs', as J. R. names the Dutch. If further evidence were wanting as to the state of feeling in the country, it is furnished by the striking language of the Venetian envoy, Pietro Contarini (1617/18). According to the report of this impartial

observer[23]: —

> 'Loud praises of past times and the worthy deeds of forefathers form the topic of conversation. I have heard great lords with tears of the deepest affliction lamenting the present state of things and grieving how England has already fallen in reputation with all the world, England whose name and whose forces were feared by foes and esteemed by friends. Now the memory of past glory lost, as it were fallen into forgetfulness of herself, she abandons not only the interests of others, but even her own.'

Such was the result of the forciful feeble policy of James, striving to pose as the keeper of the peace of Europe, and to hold the balance between the rival forces of Catholicism and Protestantism already arming for the terrible struggle of the Thirty Years' War. After the marriage of his only daughter with the head of the Protestant Union in Germany, he was soon once more in eager pursuit of the phantasmal Spanish match, which was for so many years to make him follow a vacillating policy. The skilful diplomacy of Diego Sarmiento d'Acuña, Count of Gondomar, who represented Philip III in London after 1613, enabled him at this time to acquire a great ascendancy over James, which with brief intervals he maintained for some years. The Spanish envoy left no steps untried in the course of the disputes which arose with the United Provinces to prejudice the King's mind against the Dutch. He found the

[23] *Relazioni Venete*, *Inghilterra*, iv. 206.

moment peculiarly favourable for making his influence felt, and he used his opportunities to the utmost. It must be remembered that the year 1612, in which first Robert Cecil, Lord Salisbury, died, and then six months later Henry, Prince of Wales, a youth of great promise and popularity, whose strong personality must have impressed itself on the history of his times, is a critical dividing point in the reign of James I. Ranke has in his account of this period laid considerable stress on this fact: —

> 'In the first years of his reign in England', he writes, 'so long as Robert Cecil lived, King James exercised no great influence. The Privy Council possessed to the full the authority, which belonged to it of old custom. James used simply to confirm the resolutions, which were adopted in the bosom of the Council under the influence of the treasurer. He appears in the reports of ambassadors as a phantom King, and the minister as the real ruler of the country. After the death of Cecil all this was changed. The King knew the party divisions which prevailed in the Council; he knew how to hold the balance between them, and in the midst of their divisions to carry out his views… Great affairs were generally transacted between the King and the favourite in the ascendant at the time in conferences to which only a few others were admitted, and sometimes not even these. The King himself decided, and the resolutions that were taken were communicated to the Privy Council, which gradually became accustomed to do

nothing more than invest them with the customary forms.'[24]

It was at this very time, when King James, yielding himself more and more to the persuasive blandishments of Gondomar, began to take a more markedly personal part in the direction of foreign policy, that a succession of fresh difficulties with the Dutch arose. The execution of the proclamation, which had been deferred for two years in 1610, actually remained a dead letter until 1616. Not that there had been any removal of the causes which had originally called it forth. On the contrary, the first years of the truce were a period of marked activity and vigorous forward policy in the United Provinces. In every direction, through the energetic and vigilant statesmanship of Oldenbarneveldt, the commercial enterprise of the people was enabled to open out fresh outlets for trade, and finally to secure the recognition of the young Republic as an influential member of the European family of nations. Diplomatic missions were dispatched to Venice in 1609 and to Constantinople in 1612, which prepared the way for a great extension of Dutch trade in the Eastern Mediterranean. Even more important were the close relations established with Sweden and Russia. Göteburg became after 1609 virtually a Dutch town, and before the middle of the century all Swedish industries and Swedish commerce had passed more or less into Dutch management or under Dutch control. In the reign of Elizabeth the friendliest relations had subsisted with the Tsar, Ivan the Terrible and his successors, so

[24] Ranke, *Hist. of England* (Oxf. trans.), i. 473.

that for some years the English Muscovy Company had almost a monopoly of Russian trade by the White Sea. But all this was now changed. A famous Dutch merchant, Balthazar de Moncheron, established a factory at Archangel in 1584, and from that time forward the Dutch, at first vigorous competitors with the English for the Russian market, gradually gained the supremacy. The appearance of a Russian embassy at the Hague in 1614 was the mark of the triumph of Dutch diplomacy at Moscow: henceforth Russia was practically closed to all but Netherlanders. In 1615 a treaty with the Hanse towns placed the Baltic trade even more completely than it had been in Dutch hands. In the East Indies the English Company could not compete with its far wealthier and more thoroughly organized rival.

There was, however, one element of weakness in the position of the United Provinces on which the English were never weary of insisting. By his possession of the cautionary towns the King of England appeared in the eyes of the world to be recognized as a protector of the Dutch Republic, who had certain rights over it. Oldenbarneveldt in his negotiations had doubtless been hampered by the plain evidence which the presence of English garrisons in Flushing, Brill, and Rammekens afforded, that the States did not exercise full sovereign authority within their own borders. In these circumstances he (Oldenbarneveldt) knowing full well the financial straits to which King James was reduced through the long-standing disagreement between him and his Parliament, made overtures in 1615 through the resident

ambassador Caron to redeem the towns by the payment of a sum of ready money. The annual charge of £40,000 received from the States was barely more than sufficient for the maintenance of the garrisons. The total amount claimed by the English Government was £600,000; the Dutch offered £100,000 in cash, and three further sums of £50,000 in half-yearly instalments, or £250,000 in all. The offer was accepted and in June, 1616, the cautionary towns were transferred into the hands of the Dutch.

It was, however, agreed that, for the sake of maintaining good relations between the two countries, the new English ambassador, Sir Dudley Carleton, should like his predecessor, Sir Ralph Winwood, retain his seat in the Council of State. This was the more important, as the King had (as already stated) for the past three years been steadily moving towards a Spanish alliance. What were his precise aims and what his ultimate purpose it was difficult even for the practised and penetrating insight of a statesman of Oldenbarneveldt's experience to discover. Perhaps James scarcely knew himself. But the retention of fortresses like Flushing and Brill at the mouths of two most important Dutch waterways by a foreign sovereign, who was intriguing to win the favour of the Spanish foe, was for the Republic a most serious danger. Their redemption therefore at so trifling a cost was a stroke of policy by which the aged Advocate did a great service to his country. Certain it is that James felt a grudge against Oldenbarneveldt, and that, when shortly afterwards civil strife broke out in the United Provinces,

Sir D. Carleton, acting on the King's instructions, did his utmost to bring about the great statesman's downfall and to support his enemies in compassing his death.

But to return. Sir Dudley Carleton, when entering upon his duties at the Hague in January, 1616, found, in addition to the negotiations for the 'reddition' of the cautionary towns, several thorny questions requiring delicate handling. In his instructions[25] the following somewhat enigmatical passage occurs: —

> 'Some two years since there did arise between the Company of our Muscovy Merchants and the Merchants of Amsterdam a great difference concerning the navigation of Greenland[26] and the fishing of whales in those parts. Our desire is that all good correspondence may be maintained, as between our Crowns and their Provinces, so between our and their subjects. Therefore, whenever the subject shall fall into discourse, either in public or in private, you may confidently relate, when this question was debated before the lords of the Council, between Sir Noel Caron their embassador and the Governor of our Muscovian Company, it was evidently proved, and in a manner without contradiction, that our subjects were first discoverers of that negotiation and that trade of fishing; that privately they were possessed of that island, and there had planted and erected our standard, thereby to signify and notify to the world the

[25] Dated Jan. 6/16. Letters to and from Sir Dudley Carleton during his embassy in Holland from January 1615/16, to December 1620. London, 1757.

[26] Greenland here stands for Spitzbergen. All through these disputes, owing to geographical ignorance, the two terms are used almost interchangeably.

property, which we challenge; which our subjects, by their industries, having appropriated to themselves, did not hold it reasonable they should be forced to communicate to others the fruits of their labours.'

The origin and cause of this new fishery dispute requires to be briefly told, as it is characteristic of the times and of the way in which, in almost every part of the world, the English trader and the Dutch trader met in rivalry, and with the inevitable result that their interests clashed and bad feeling arose. Certain English fishing vessels as early as 1608 made their way to the Arctic Ocean to fish for whales off the shores of Spitzbergen. The adventure was successful, and was repeated. The news of it attracted some Biscayans, then other foreigners, and in 1612 two Dutch ships to try their fortune in the same waters. But King James in the following year (1613) granted to the Muscovy Company an exclusive monopoly of the Greenland, meaning thereby the Spitzbergen, whale fishery. He claimed these northern waters as the property of the British Crown, because, so it was averred, Hugh Willoughby had in 1553 discovered Spitzbergen. The conferring of this monopoly caused in 1613 a numerous fishing fleet, some of the vessels strongly armed, to set sail from England for Spitzbergen. A landing was made, and the whole archipelago formally annexed and named King James' Newland. The next step of the Muscovy Company's fleet was to clear the ground of intruders, whether foreigners or English 'interlopers.' Among the foreigners were several Dutch

boats. These were attacked, boarded, plundered, and then sent home.

Such an act of violence naturally aroused resentment in Holland. The States-General took the matter up, and refused to admit the right of James to interfere with the fishermen. They denied that Hugh Willoughby had sighted Spitzbergen at all in 1553, and confidently affirmed that the discovery of the island was made by Jacob van Heemskerk in 1596, who named it Spitzbergen, planted the Dutch flag upon it, and spent the winter on its shores. If, then, any people had preferential rights in the waters surrounding Spitzbergen, it was the Dutch, but the States did not claim or admit any such rights. They held that the sea was open to all to navigate and to fish in without let or hindrance. To Winwood, who in August, 1613, quitted the Hague to become Secretary of State in London, was entrusted the mission of bringing the complaints and the protest of the States to the notice of James, and further, of asking for reparation to the Amsterdammers, whose vessels had been seized and plundered. The King at this time was anxious to be on friendly terms with the Dutch, and an answer was returned (October 25) that 'not only reparation should be made, but that steps should be taken to prevent a recurrence of such disorders.' The States were not satisfied, however, with so general a reply, and wished that the English claim to exclusive rights in the fisheries should be abandoned. The ambassador Caron was instructed to present to the King an argument from the

pen of the geographer Plancius, in which this claim was shown to be without foundation. It produced no effect upon James, always unwilling to yield in a matter affecting his sovereign prerogatives, however shadowy. But the States were equally determined. Their reply to the *non-possumus* attitude of the King was the granting of a charter, early in 1614 (January 27), to a company, generally known as the Northern (sometimes as the Greenland) Company, which conferred on a group of merchants the exclusive privilege of fishing for whales and walrus, and of trading and exploring in the Northern seas between the limits of Nova Zembla and Davis's Straits; Spitzbergen, Bear Island, and Greenland therein included.[27] The States-General likewise consented that warships at the charges of the company should be allowed to accompany the fishing fleet for their protection (April 4). The effect of these strong measures was seen in the changed attitude of the Muscovy Company, who in the summer of 1614 (July 2) made an agreement with their rivals, that they should each of them use a portion of the island as a basis for their fishery, and should unite in keeping out all intruders. The extraordinary mission of Sir Henry Wotton in February, 1615, to the Hague to treat for a settlement of the Jülich-Cleves question, gave an opportunity for proposing that he should, while in the Netherlands, meet Commissioners of the States to discuss also other important matters, and among these the dispute about the so-called 'Greenland' fisheries. In April the conference took

[27] Aitzema *Saken van Staet en Oorlog*, ii. 356.

place. The Dutch, while laying stress upon their primary rights as discoverers, disclaimed any desire to exclude the English; on the contrary, they endeavoured to arrive at a friendly arrangement by which the two nations should share the fishery 'in unity and security' together. Nothing, however, was effected. The language of King James in his ambassador's instructions, in which mention is made of the differences that had arisen 'on account of the fishery in the North Sea, near the shores of Greenland, of right solely belonging to us and our people, but interrupted by the Hollanders', showed that he approached the subject in an irreconcilable spirit. All that Wotton could say was that he would report the matter to the King, who would inform Caron later of his decision. The affair was, in other words, hung up, and the dangerous spectacle was again witnessed of two fishing fleets carrying on their trade in close proximity, each under the protection of warships.

The Dutch force in 1615 was, however, far stronger, and no hostilities took place. For the same reason an armed peace was maintained in 1617, but in the following year acts of aggression were committed, and loud complaints were raised on both sides. An attempt was now made by the King to strengthen the hands of the Muscovy Company by sanctioning for the purposes of the whale fishery an alliance with the East India Company. The two companies were, as far as regards the Spitzbergen enterprise, to be regarded as one, thus making a larger amount of capital available for the outfit of the fishing fleet and for

the maintenance of the storage huts and so-called 'cookeries' on shore. Thirteen well-equipped ships sailed for Spitzbergen in 1618, and an even superior number from Holland and Zeeland, accompanied by two war vessels. Neither the English nor the Dutch sailors were in the mood to brook interference, and from the outset it was almost certain that if they met there would be mischief. The English were the first aggressors, but were in their turn attacked by the Dutch with the result that their fleet was dispersed and many of their vessels plundered. The 'Greenland' fisheries question had reached an acute stage. Such a condition of things could not continue, and Sir Dudley Carleton, the English ambassador, appeared in person before the States-General (October 3, 1618) to utter a strong remonstrance and to urge the States, if they wished to remain on good terms with the King, to dispatch a special embassy to deal with the disputes that had arisen between the two countries, not only concerning the 'Greenland' fishing, but in the East Indies, and about the herring fishery and the cloth trade also.

At this point, before giving an account of the embassy of 1618, we must turn back and bring up to date the history of the herring fishery question from 1610, when the execution of the proclamation requiring a licence from the fishermen was postponed, and also briefly touch upon the two other causes of grievance in regard to the cloth trade and the disputes between the two East India Companies.

For several years after the return of the embassy of 1610 the

Dutch herring fishery appears to have been quietly carried on as usual without let or hindrance from the English Government. No attempt was made to enforce the proclamation until 1616. The cause of the alteration of James's policy at that date was due to the refusal of the States-General to admit English dyed cloths into the United Provinces. The manufacture of woollen cloth had long been the chief of English industries, and the monopoly of the trade in wool and woollen goods in the Netherlands, Northern France and Western Germany had been in the hands of one of the oldest of English Chartered Companies, the Fellowship of Merchant Adventurers[28], whose first charter was granted by Henry VI in 1462. The Adventurer's Court and Staple were for many years placed at Antwerp. But in 1568 they were driven away from the Netherlands by Alva, and forced to settle elsewhere. They went first to Emden, then to Hamburg. But the Hanse towns were jealous of their trade and prosperity, and the Emperor was induced in 1597 to banish them from Germany. At this date the authority of Spain was no longer recognized north of the Scheldt. The Adventurers accordingly in 1598 moved to Middelburg in Zeeland, and extensive privileges were conferred upon them by the States-General, the States of Zeeland, and the town of Middelburg, including freedom from duties on imports or exports, as well as from charges for staple rights and harbour dues, and the right to be tried in their own courts.

The trade of the Adventurers consisted entirely in undyed

[28] See Note D.

cloths. The English, though the best weavers of woollen cloth in the world, had not learnt as yet the art of dyeing, and the unfinished cloths were imported into the Netherlands, there to be dressed and dyed for the continental markets. The consequence was that a great industry sprang up in the provinces, especially in Holland, and many thousands of skilled hands were employed in this work.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.