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John E. Morris

Excerpt

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CHAPTER I

EUROPE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

To say that the national fortunes of England and the very existence and growth of our Empire depended entirely upon the outcome of the national struggle against three great men in turn is a commonplace. But it is extremely important to understand what were the resources of these powers against which we fought, and it is not every Englishman who is willing to acknowledge that Spain and France had many other enemies than ourselves. In fact, it would not be too much to say that Philip II, Louis XIV, and Napoleon, failed in turn because each had too many irons in the fire and that, though England played an extremely important part in their overthrow, yet it was the number of enemies that each created against himself that ultimately decided each of the great struggles.

If we wish to take a distinct date from which to mark the development of England, we shall find that the ten years, 1550—60, are of great importance in the history of Europe as well as in our own. As far as we are concerned, the loss of Calais and the accession of Queen Elizabeth usher in a new era. At the same time Charles V—the fifth Emperor of the name, but King Charles I of Spain—abdicated and left Austria under his brother Ferdinand, Spain and the Spanish dominions and the Netherlands under his son Philip II. A long series of wars between Spain and the Empire on the one side and

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[More information](#)

2 EUROPE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

France on the other, wars mostly fought out in Italy, came to an end by the *Treaty of Cateau Cambrésis* in 1559. The *Treaty of Augsburg* in 1555 gave to Germany a religious settlement which lasted into the next century.

The concentration of power in the Hapsburg family is well known. Maximilian of Austria married Mary of Burgundy, sole heiress of Charles the Bold; their son, Philip, married Joan of Spain, daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella; their son was Charles V. Therefore this prince was Archduke of Austria by paternal right, King of Spain by maternal, master of the Burgundian Netherlands and the County of Burgundy through his grandmother, and also Emperor by election. His strength was more apparent than real, for he could not secure the implicit obedience of all his subjects. He was most fond of the Netherlands, and in the eyes of the Spaniards was a foreigner and a Fleming. But Philip II, his son, lived in Spain, and was a foreigner and tyrant to the Netherlands. In Italy both father and son were foreigners, holding Lombardy and Naples, Sardinia and Sicily, as conquerors in the struggle against France for the mastery in that fair land. In Germany the conflicting interests of many rulers were so individual that Charles could never be an autocrat there.

Taking Germany first, we find a host of church and lay potentates, archbishops, bishops, abbots, dukes, counts, princes, strong or weak, ruling over lands wide or small, Catholic or Lutheran or Calvinistic, and in their midst many great free cities. These formed the Empire, nominally the *Holy Roman Empire*. As the outcome of many struggles in the early Middle Ages a system of election had become crystallised, and on the death of an emperor, or it may be by anticipation before his death, seven great lords met together to choose his successor. The seven *Electors* were the three Archbishops of Köln (Cologne), Trier (Trèves), and Mainz (Mayence), the

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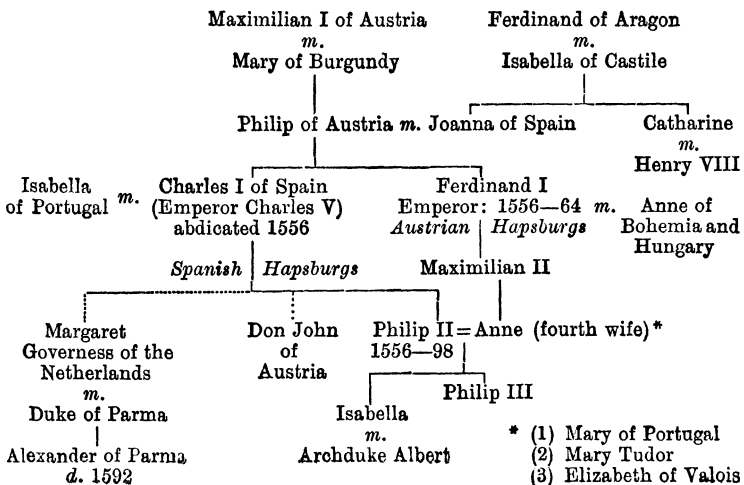
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THE HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE

3

Margraf (Marquis, count of the mark or borderland) of Brandenburg, the Duke of Saxony, the Count Palatine, and the King of Bohemia; the last named ruled over a non-German people. For a long period they elected an Austrian Archduke of the Hapsburg dynasty. While Charles V was yet alive they had already chosen his brother Ferdinand to be King of the Romans, a title preparatory to that of Emperor, and Charles had handed over to Ferdinand the government of Austria. The one thing that Germany needed was unity. The hundreds of great and small rulers could not combine when each was seeking his own good, and, although the Empire was divided into *Circles* for administration and for the raising of imperial armies, there was no possibility of any willing cohesion. There was a central governing body, the *Diet*, to which came the feudal tenants-in-chief and the representatives of the free cities, but rival interests prevented anything being done for the common good.

HOUSE OF HAPSBURG.



1—2

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[More information](#)

4 EUROPE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

German unity might have been secured in the sixteenth century. Trade does a great deal to combine peoples together, and the free cities were great centres of trade. The root of a great commercial tree was Venice, and the trunk along which the sap flowed was the old Roman road which ascended the valley of the Adige from Italy into the Austrian Tyrol, crossed the Alps by the Brenner Pass, descended to the river Inn, and so reached the Danube. Many branches diverged, eastwards to Vienna, westwards from Ratisbon to Augsburg and Ulm, Basle and Strasburg, northwards over the gap through the mountains of North Bavaria to Nuremberg and down the Main to the Rhine. In central Germany the line of commerce stretched out to Magdeburg and Halberstadt, and thence to the cities of the coast. The cities were fortified and most of them were self-governed, and the feudal lords were too much indebted to them for the necessaries of peace and war to attempt to destroy them. There was a second possible factor of German unity besides trade, namely German learning; and the outbreak of the Lutheran movement was due to the German learned mind, which rejected the religious domination of an Italian Pope and examined points of doctrine for itself. Now Napoleon said that Charles V ought to have been a Protestant and put himself at the head of a national German movement to secure both religious and political unity; many historians have adopted this view. But Charles held the medieval theory of Church and State, Emperor and Pope each supreme in his own place. The consequence was that the Lutheran movement, deprived of the Emperor's support, was to a very large extent destructive only. The German conscience approved of Luther's defiance of the authority of Rome, but clung to the right of private judgement, which he invoked against Rome; if Luther challenged the right of the Pope on questions of doctrine, other Germans challenged the authority of Luther himself

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[More information](#)

TRADE AND RELIGION IN GERMANY 5

The consequence was that the Reformation intensified the spirit of disunion. The constructive reformer was John Calvin, and his form of Church government as founded in Geneva was a model copied by the reformers of Scotland, of France, of Holland, when the great revolt broke out against Philip, and of some German states. The Calvinistic doctrines were hard and fast, and had to be accepted by all those who were subject to a national Calvinistic Church. On the other hand the Church of Rome, getting rid of its worst abuses and purifying itself, initiated the counter-Reformation, in which the chief agent was the newly instituted Order of Jesus. Thus a large part of Germany was lost to Protestantism.

In 1555 the religious *Peace of Augsburg* was made, being the work of Ferdinand, not of Charles. Ferdinand was not a bad Catholic, but he was an opportunist, that is to say ready to give up something for the sake of a greater advantage, and his object was to stop the dismemberment of Germany so as to be able to make head against the Turks. The principle of this peace was *Cujus Regio ejus Religio*; whoever was the lord of a region should decide what its religion should be. Therefore the rights of German peoples were disregarded, and individual princes settled the form of Church government for their own lands, whilst pledging themselves not to interfere with each other. Germany now remained comparatively quiet until the horrible Thirty Years' War of the next century. Church lands in countries already Protestant were secularised, that is to say administered for the benefit of their lay rulers. Thus in the next century there were possibilities of confusion and war whenever the Church of Rome should try to regain these secularised lands. In the meanwhile a *Council* was sitting at Trent on the Adige, and therefore on the high road between Italy and Germany, to discuss the policy of the Church. It held its last sitting in 1563; it left several points

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[More information](#)

6 EUROPE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

unsettled, but did much to revive the spiritual life of Roman Catholics.

The main object in life of Ferdinand, and of Maximilian who succeeded him, was to beat back the Turks, and therefore their eyes were always turned eastwards so that they had very little influence over the questions which agitated Spain and France. Ferdinand, marrying the heiress of the last king of Hungary and Bohemia¹, added those non-German lands to the Hapsburg dominions, and thus brought about the "Dual Monarchy" which existed to 1918. But then two-thirds of the Hungary that we know was in the power of the Turks, Buda included. Wars between Christian states always gave to the Turks their opportunity, even as the Crusaders had failed to effect a permanent lodgement in Palestine because of the rivalries and jealousies between them. But while the Emperors were devoted to the defence of Europe by land against the Turks, the commotions which had occurred in Germany in connection with the Reformation had so upset the country that the great promise of German unity, which seemed possible about the year 1500, had by 1550 disappeared. Most of the minor princelings devoted themselves to supplying German mercenaries to England or to France or even to Spain,—in fact to whoever could pay them. The great bulk of almost any 16th century army was composed of German Landsknechts, chiefly masses of foot pikemen, or of mounted Schwarzreiters, and both had an evil reputation as being neither loyal to their employers nor competent in their own profession, let alone the fact that they murdered and plundered pitilessly. But whatever the defects of these mercenaries, they were too useful to the King of France or to the

¹ The Bohemians belong to the great Slavonic group of nations, such as the Prussians, Poles, Russians, Croats, Serbians and others. The Hungarians or Magyars are a race apart; but only a proportion of the population of Hungary is Magyar, and the rest is Slavonic or Rumanian.

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VENICE AND THE TURKS

7

Netherlanders to be disregarded, and even the King of Spain would often enlist thousands of them, though so vastly inferior to his own trained Spaniards, simply to prevent his enemies from enlisting them. Another theory of German failure is connected with trade. When Venice began to decline in consequence of the discovery of the Cape route to India by the Portuguese and the divergence of Asiatic trade from the Levant to Lisbon, the loss of the trade from the overland Brenner Pass route might be compared to the drying up of the sap of the trunk of the tree. Germany now looked for her commerce to the Netherlands and the northern ports, not to Venice.

As the Emperor was the bulwark of Christianity by land against the Turks, so was the aristocratic Republic of Venice by sea. By the middle of the 16th century, not only was Venice feeling this decline of her eastern trade owing to the rise of Portugal, but she had to put forth efforts beyond her power to check the spread of the Ottoman dominion over Greece and the islands off the coast of the Adriatic. It was not only Turkish conquest that was against her. Wealth always causes jealousy; and the various Powers, though themselves benefiting by the trade which Venice gave to them, resented very much the conquest of the hinterland which we know as Venetia. As long as the city of the lagoons was merely a trading city, she stirred no kings against herself. When she gradually conquered Padua and Verona and the whole of the lower Adige, and even as far as the eastern borders of Lombardy, it was thought that she was going beyond her province, for she thus dominated the lands by which Germany was connected with Italy, namely the outlet of the Brenner route; and so the League of Cambrai was formed against her in 1508. Yet, on the conclusion of the war of the League of Cambrai, she regained all her mainland empire, for she was ever a clever and a lenient mistress. Now the problem for the Venetian Senate in face of the Turkish

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[More information](#)

8 EUROPE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

advance was a very difficult one. If she opposed the Turks with all her might, the Sultan had only to refuse leave for Venetian traders to come to his dominions. Thus we find, alternately, a compromise made with the Turkish government to leave to Venice such trade in the Levant as still remained, and an open state of war. And it was not only the government of the Sultan that had to be considered. The advance guard of the Mohammedans were the pirates who infested all the shores of North Africa. On one occasion Charles V stirred himself to make a mighty effort, and captured Tunis in 1535 from the great corsair Kheyr-ed-din, usually known as Barbarossa¹; but in 1541 another great expedition against Algiers failed completely. The Spaniards continued to garrison Goletta, the port of Tunis, up to 1574, when it was finally lost for ever; and from this date right down to the 19th century no really serious attempt was made by any European Power to put down Mediterranean piracy. Christians during all this period were frequently made galley slaves. The greatest Christian Powers sent their consular agents to Algiers or Tunis and made agreements with the Sultan at Constantinople, but otherwise the traders had to look after themselves and to sail in company under arms. The one great effort that was made in 1571 resulted in the victory of Lepanto, when the Venetian fleet, under the command of Philip's half brother, Don John of Austria, reinforced by a comparatively small number of ships from Genoa and the Pope and Spain, broke the power of the Sultan for a time, but did not clear the Mediterranean of Mohammedans.

¹ The corsairs of N. Africa made war on the Christians and raided their coasts, sometimes independently of the Sultan to whom they owed nominal allegiance, sometimes as his allies. Burke says "The Turk cannot govern Egypt and Arabia and Curdistan as he governs Thrace; nor has he the same dominion in Crimea and Algiers, which he has at Bruse and Smyrna. The Sultan gets such obedience as he can. He governs with a loose rein that he may govern at all."

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[More information](#)

SPANISH POWER IN LOMBARDY 9

The long wars between France and Spain before and during the reign of Charles V had largely been fought for the possession of Lombardy and Naples, and Spain had finally triumphed. In 1559, at Cateau Cambrésis, it was finally acknowledged that France had no status beyond the Alps. Lombardy was now a Spanish province. Here was trained the best of the Spanish legions, the *tercio* of Lombardy. There was a certain amount of local freedom in Milan, and also in the smaller towns. Charles V actually supported the Senate of Milan against his own Governor. Philip indeed supported his Governor against the Senate, but not so far as to create a despotism. The Milanese continued quietly to enjoy the protection of their laws and of their Senate. It was in the next century that the Lombards suffered and wished Philip II alive again, for under him, in spite of heavy taxes which barely covered the cost of government and from which he drew no profit, and in spite of a certain amount of military duty in the cavalry, the Milanese preserved their rights. The Hapsburgs were greatly concerned by the question how they could communicate between Lombardy and Austria. Venice controlling the Adige route up to the Brenner Pass, it resulted that a Spanish army, except by the courtesy of the Venetian Senate which was neutral and disliked any violation of its territory, had to use the Valtellina leading up from Lake Como to the very steep and lofty Stelvio Pass, by which they reached the Upper Adige and the Brenner. It was an inferior and difficult route, but often it was a cause of war between the Hapsburgs and their enemies, and in later days France paralysed the Spanish arms by securing for herself the alliance of the Rhaetian Swiss who controlled the north of the Stelvio.

To the north-west of Lombardy the valley of the Ticino leads from the north shore of Lake Maggiore to the St Gotthard Pass, and this route was held by the Swiss.

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[More information](#)

10 EUROPE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

They had conquered the present Canton of Ticino, and had planted three castles at Bellinzona, a few miles north of the lake, so as to control the district of Italy where the great highway debouched; to-day the Ticinesi being Italians do the rough work while high positions in their Canton are held by up-country Swiss, but they are personally free, whereas in the 16th century they were practically slaves. Thus the Swiss confederacy had their means of access to Italy. But the ascendancy of the Spaniards in Lombardy, and in particular the victory of the Spanish arms at Pavia in 1525, checked the further expansion of their power. In the days of Philip II the Swiss fought as mercenaries only, and were unable to extend their sway further into Italy.

Next to the west, the Duchy of Savoy spread from the Lake of Geneva across the main Alps between France and Italy into Piedmont. Gradually the Dukes lost the north side of the Lake where the Swiss created the Canton of Vaud, but they gained more than they lost, for by their occupation of Piedmont they controlled the West Alpine routes. Here again French and Spaniards were both anxious to secure influence; in the days of Philip II Savoy was almost a province of Spain, and under Louis XIV of France. Often we find the siege of some little fort taking a place in history which strikes us as being much too important for its size, until we see from the map that it was a military post controlling some mountain pass. Between France and Spain the Duchy of Savoy thrived because of its geographical position.

The Republic of Genoa had always been the rival of Venice. In the 16th century it was allied to Spain, and the great families of the Dorias and Spinolas supplied admirals and generals to Spain. It secured a large share of such Mediterranean trade as would otherwise have gone to Spain. It held most of the Riviera and ruled it despotically; many a little Riviera town still has its