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ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

SAINT NICHOLAS SOCIETY

OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

BY

JAMES W. BEEKMAN

SATURDAY DECEMBER 4

1869

PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY

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Extract from the Minutes of the St. Nicholas Society.

“At a special meeting held at the rooms of the Historical Society, on the 4th day of December, 1869, after the delivery of an Address by the Hon. JAS. W. BEEKMAN,

It was resolved,

“That the thanks of the Saint Nicholas Society be presented to the Hon. JAMES W. BEEKMAN, for the interesting and instructive Address delivered by him, at the request of the Society, and that a copy of the Address be requested for publication.

“Attest.

A. R. MACDONOUGH,

Secretary.”



THE
FOUNDERS OF NEW YORK.

Brothers of St. Nicholas :

When the Turkish sultan, Amurath III, heard some foreigners describe the protracted and obstinate conflicts between the Spaniards and the Hollanders in the sixteenth century, he called for a map, and seeing how small a space was covered by the United Provinces, he quietly remarked : “ If the business were mine, I would send my pioneers, and make them shovel such an insignificant corner of the earth into the sea.” This corner of the earth, however, has given to the world the printing press, the telescope, and free schools; and by these three mighty agencies, has developed modern civilization. Preserving her identity by her language, Holland has imparted her spirit to those English-speaking nations which have become great by Dutch example.

As children who have thriven in the world by the help of the wise teachings of good parents, love to visit the old homestead, even if it be no larger or more stately than when it was built, so let us go for a while, to the fatherland. Let us see what is going on there now, and compare the fortunes of those of the family who have staid at home, with the condition of the wanderers who *went west.*

The founders of New York were Netherlanders. The seven united provinces in 1609, covered nearly the same territory which now is known as the Kingdom of the Netherlands; a little kingdom about two hundred English miles long, and one hundred and ten miles wide. Its surface is less than one-fourth of the extent of the state of New York, and its population in 1863 was three and a half millions. Numerous colonies containing many millions of men, are subject to the Dutch flag. In the east, are Java, Madura, Banca, Ternate, Amboyna, Banda, Timor, extensive possessions in Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes and New Guinea, with a population, ten years ago, of sixteen millions and a half. In America, Dutch governors control the colonies of Surinam, Curaçao, St. Eustatia, St. Martin's, Saba, and Aruba, and in Africa there is Guinea, containing over one hundred thousand souls.

Listen to an account of our fatherland as it now is: The sea is kept out by dykes that have cost fifteen hundred millions, reckoned in our American dollars, and these dykes require to keep them in repair, the yearly expenditure of two millions.

Ninety lakes have been drained, and within thirty years the Harlem sea has been pumped dry. By this triumph of Dutch engineering more than seventy square miles of good land have been reclaimed, and where large vessels were sailing, now stands a thriving town of over five thousand inhabitants.

A vast ship canal, seventeen miles long, from Amsterdam to the North sea, is on the point of being opened

to commerce. The port by which this canal enters the ocean, is deep enough for the Great Eastern steamship, and is built of blocks of artificial stone formed out of the sand of the beach. The walls jut out a mile into the sea, and enclose a harbor two hundred acres in extent. The Zuider Zee, is also soon to be partly dried, for the surveys are complete, and the money is ready for the execution of a vast engineering work by which more than seven hundred square miles of dry land will be added to the main shore. The ship canal of the Helder, for many years in use by the East India merchantmen, is fifty-one miles long.

The eloquent Saurin said that Holland, created in the midst of marshes, has no solid foundation except in the wisdom of her rulers and the untiring industry of her people.

We have been hearing of their industry; let us turn now, for a moment, to their wisdom. The Dutch make a duty of systematic benevolence. They have a Society for the Public Good, as it is well named, having two hundred and twenty branches, and fourteen thousand members, who meet once a fortnight and consider the best means of promoting schools, asylums and hospitals. The discussion of politics and religious doctrines is prohibited. The measures agreed on, are carried out in concert by the members. More than seven thousand four hundred charitable societies, four hundred and ninety-four hospitals, one hundred and thirty-eight asylums, forty establishments to procure work for poor workmen out of employ, make up part of the inventory

of Dutch good works. There are pauper colonies on waste sandy plains, which *were* drifting barrens. A million of guilders are annually spent upon these reformatories, where the labor of the poor whom the community must care for, reclaims useless lands, and almost pays for the maintenance of the colonists. The yearly incomes of all the charities of Holland exceed four millions of dollars. But what shall we say about the four thousand schools, with their four hundred and sixty-six thousand scholars, one-eighth of the entire population. Surely they constitute the crowning glory of our fatherland, and the perfect religious freedom which everywhere prevails, is their natural result.

Of the commerce of the Netherlands it will be sufficient to remind you that in 1861, the imports were two hundred millions, the exports seventeen hundred millions, and the tonnage afloat was over seventeen hundred thousand tons.

“The people,” says a very recent American traveler, “are much the reverse of the types made familiar to us by Diederick Knickerbocker.” “The men are shrewd and honest;—enterprise and activity are in operation all over the land.”¹

As to the government of the country, the limited monarchy which now rules the Low Countries, is but the executive of the people, whose states-general, in their wholesome and moderate method of voting and of representation might be imitated by other free nations

¹ *New York Tribune*, Nov. 4th, 1869.

with advantage. There are two houses in the Dutch legislature; the upper house consists of thirty-nine members elected for nine years, one-third retiring every third year, and is made up of the largest tax-payers, who are returned by the different states or provinces. The lower house contains seventy-two members chosen for four years, from thirty-eight electoral districts, one for every forty-five thousand inhabitants. Elections occur every second year. Every voter must be twenty-three years old, and must be a tax-payer to the amount of at least eight dollars a year. Each province fixes its own local rate of qualification for voters, which in some districts is as high as sixty-five dollars, yearly tax. The members receive a salary of eight hundred and fifty dollars and traveling expenses, and the sessions must, by law, continue not less than twenty days.

With this picture of the fatherland of to-day in your memories, go back with me now two hundred years of history, and let us compare our own American home at that time, with the Netherlands as they then were:

“The two hundred and eight walled cities, many of them among the most stately in Christendom, the one hundred and fifty chartered towns and sixty-three hundred villages, the sixty fortresses of surprising strength,” which made up the United Provinces in 1550, had passed through a century of war and religious persecution. But the Hollanders had been battling with a new weapon in their hands—Laurence Koster’s types had in 1423, made it possible to produce a Bible for five crowns, which before Koster’s invention could not be had

for five hundred. More than a century of free printing had produced generations of thinking soldiers, who cultivated letters and the arts in the midst of battles and sieges. Eighty years of fighting seemed only to enrich a land which its enemies vainly hoped to wear out.

Almost two centuries had elapsed since printed books were given to the people, before our Dutch forefathers made their settlements in America. In 1609, when Hendrik Hudson first landed on the island of Manhatas, free schools and freedom of religious creeds had long been established and undisputed things in the fatherland. Emerging triumphantly from their long contest with Spain, the United Provinces then saw their palmiest days. There were then, as now, but three and a half millions of people, who dwelt upon a territory that covered but fourteen thousand square miles; "yet," says Motley, "the Dutch republic was the first free nation to put a girdle of empire round the earth. It had courage, enterprise, intelligence, perseverance, faith in itself; the instinct of self-government and self-help, hatred of tyranny, the love of science, of liberty and of money. It had one great defect; *it had no country.*"

When New York was founded, this "nation without a country," had nearly one hundred thousand sailors, who manned more than three thousand ships. Eight hundred smaller vessels carried on the famous herring fishery, while swarms of river craft and canal barges were employed in a vast inland trade. Commerce was mainly free. Thus, without natural resources, by sheer

force of intellectual power and intelligent courage, Holland, with freedom and common schools as her instruments, unlocked and gathered for herself the wealth of the world; while Spain, with a vast territory, abounding in every means of riches and prosperity, was sinking into ruin, under a government of ecclesiastics, which punished heresy with death, and education with torture. In those triumphant days of the fatherland she laid the foundations of this metropolis, and of these United States of America. Her influence and character, if not her language, pervades them now.

In the year 1670, there appeared in London, *A brief Character of the Low Countries under the States, written long since, being three weeks Observation of the Vices and Virtues of the Inhabitants*. The author was Owen Feltham, an English gentleman of liberal culture, to the ninth edition of whose admirable *Resolves* these *Observations* appear as an appendix. "'Tis indeed," says he, "but a bridge of swimming earth, or a flag, somewhat thicker than ordinary, * * * almost all of them (the Dutch) are seamen born. They have not of their own, materials to compile one ship, yet how many nations do they furnish? * * * Where have you under heaven such impregnable fortifications? The conies find rocks, and *they* make them. For war they are grasshoppers, and without a king, go forth in bands to conquer kings.

"Their merchants are at this day the greatest in the universe. Even among us they shame us with their industry—they win our drowned grounds which we cannot recover, and chase back Neptune to his own old banks.

“ Their merchandise amounted in Guicciardini’s time to fourteen millions per annum, whereas England, which is in compass almost as large again, and hath the ocean as a ring about her, made not above six millions yearly.

“ They are in some sort gods, for they set bounds to the sea, and when they list, they let it pass them. Even their dwelling is a miracle. They live lower than the fishes in the very lap of the floods. They are a glass in which kings may see that the desire of being too absolute is to walk upon pinnacles and the tops of pyramids, that liberty in man is as the skin to the body not to be put off but together with life. * * * ’Tis an universality of all religions, which grow here confusedly. You may here try all, and take at last what you like best.”

Charles II, of England, who knew Holland well, used to say that he believed Providence would preserve Amsterdam, if it were only for the great charity its people have for their poor.

There is a curious description of Holland given by old Peter Heylin, who about the very time that Captain Cornelis Jacobsen Mey brought over his welcome company of colonists to Manhattan, in 1623, speaks of Amsterdam as “ a very fair haven towne where divers times at one tyde, a thousand ships of all sorts have been seene to goe out and in.” “ The women,” says he, “ are all laborious in making stufes, nay, you can scarce find a boy of four years of age, which cannot earn his own meat.”

In the beginning of the seventeenth century when the fatherland was thus prosperous, New Netherland in America was occupied but by a few small trading posts, like those of the Hudson's Bay Company in later times.

Our own ideal Dutchman, as pictured in *Valentine's Corporation Manual*, and made familiar to us as the Knickerbocker (*child's marble baker*) of Washington Irving, is merely a laughable caricature of the rough emigrant who came over as the factor and servant of the great trading companies of that period. He presents as just a picture of the Hollander, as Samuel Slick, the clockmaker, affords of the New Englander, or Doñ Quixote, of the Castilian gentleman.¹

Manhattan island, two hundred years ago, was but a barbarous country. In a recent special report made to

¹ The ridicule which a few English writers have cast upon the Dutch has given us a false notion of their merit. We begin with our school Readers, we confirm our prejudices with *Goldsmith's Traveller*, and establish our faith in the stupidity of Netherlanders, out of the veracious history of Washington Irving. D'Israeli, the elder, in his *Curiosities of Literature*, quotes approvingly the poet Churchill, who earned from the same critic, by his licentiousness and laziness, the severe comment "that Churchill was a spendthrift of fame, posterity owes him little, and pays him nothing." Churchill, (who wrote about 1762), *finely*, according to D'Israeli, says of Genius, that it is independent of situation

"And may hereafter, *even in Holland*, rise."

Oliver Goldsmith, in 1765, after describing Holland, in his admirable poem, *The Traveller*, as

"A land of tyrants, and a den of slaves;"

speaks of the Dutch, as being

"Dull as their lakes that slumber in the storm."

These flings at the rival nation, were political. The Tories, offended at the revolution of 1688, which brought a Dutch sovereign into Eng-

the legislature of New York, on the present state of education in the United States and in other countries, by V. M. Rice, superintendent of public instruction, he says: "That part of New York above Canal street was infested by Indians, and it was necessary, much later, to provide means of defence against them. The colonists subsisted principally by fisheries and the fur trade, together with a little agriculture. Their largest town was no greater than a small village of the present time, having but fifteen hundred inhabitants. Albany was not half as large, and besides these, there were no other villages larger than a country cross road of to-day, with ten or a dozen houses. Brooklyn, the third city of the

land, ridiculed the foreigners, yet with discretion. Butler in *Hudibras*, who could not have loved the Calvinism of Holland, is respectful, for he wrote *before* the national offence was given. Shakespeare nowhere says any thing worse of the Dutch, than that they were "bluff Hollanders."

It was only in later days that the ridicule began, which we have imported into America. DeFoe satirized without mercy this English fashion of abusing William III, and his nation, in his "True-born Englishman."

"These are the heroes who despise the Dutch,
And rail at new come foreigners so much.
Forgetting that themselves are all derived
From the most scoundrel race that ever lived:
A horrid crowd of rambling thieves and drones,
Who ransacked kingdoms and dispeopled towns.
The Pict and painted Briton, treach'rous Scot,
By hunger, theft and rapine hither brought,
Norwegian pirates, buccancering Danes,
Whose red-haired offspring everywhere remains,
Who joined with Norman French, composed the breed
From whence your true-born Englishmen proceed."

The literary reputation of the Dutch, may be safely left to the judgment of Hallam, who in his introduction to the *Literary History of Europe*, pronounces Holland "the peculiarly learned State of Europe through the 17th century."

United States in 1860, was half tilled by a few farmers, who took the best land and let the other run to waste. Yet with this scanty population, they kept six clergymen employed and paid. Three public schools, besides the Latin one, were kept going, and there was a score of private schools." "No great attention," says Superintendent Rice, "was paid, by the English, to education."

In an earlier portion of his report, he pays this just tribute to our fatherland: "At a time when persecution was the rule throughout Europe, the Low Countries formed an honorable exception. No man was persecuted for adherence to Arminianism or Catholicism, to Luther or to Loyola. At the same time, they provided for the intellectual progress of the children by establishing *the first system of common schools in Europe.*" This is testimony from a quarter not likely to be prejudiced.

We have a very early, but imperfect account of Manhattan, two hundred and forty years ago, in the letter of Domine Michaelius, written on the 11th of August, 1628, at Manhatas, and addressed to "Domine Adrian Smoutius, dwelling upon the Heerengracht, not far from the house of the West India Company, in Amsterdam." This letter has been preserved and translated by Henry C. Murphy, the eminent Dutch scholar, to whom we owe so much of our knowledge of the literature of Holland and of New Netherland. "The people here," says Michaelius, "for the most part are all free, somewhat rough and loose, but I find in most all of them both love and respect towards me. We had at the

first administration of the Lord's supper, full fifty communicants. They fell much wood here to carry to fatherland, and are making a windmill to saw wood. We have also a grist mill. They bake brick, but it is very poor."

New York, as lately as in 1673, when it was called New-Orange, contained not more than three hundred houses, and as many thousand inhabitants. The whole province held no more than six thousand people of European origin, nearly all of them Hollanders. The entire wealth of the city as assessed in 1675, amounted to two hundred and twenty-six thousand dollars. With the removal of the restraints which were inseparable from colonial government, the growth of New York began. Notwithstanding the disasters of three wars, two with England, and the recent civil struggle whose vast proportions we cannot ourselves yet understand, wars which extended at intervals over more than fourteen years, our city has, within two centuries, increased in wealth three thousand times, and in population almost four hundred fold. This extraordinary progress is due to commerce supported by free institutions and universal education. We shall see how large a share Holland had in producing and developing them.

¹ There is a journal of a voyage to New York in 1679-1680, by Jasper Dankers and Peter Sluyter, two members of a religious sect called Labadists, who came to America to look for a suitable place for a colony of their

¹ *Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Society*, volume 1.

community. On Saturday, September 23d, 1679, they landed at the foot of Broad street, and speak with amazement of the excellence and abundance of the peaches and apples. They went, after a few days spent in making some acquaintance with the settlers, up the Broadway, over the *Vliet* or fresh water, to Harlem, about three hours travel, just as old Harlem is three hours from old Amsterdam. After returning from a journey to Maryland and Virginia, the Labadists were summoned before Mayor Rombouts, and formally forbidden to carry on trade, or to travel, especially to Albany, without permission in writing; and they afterwards took a passport, when they went up the Hudson river. "The governor forbade any flour to be bolted, except in the city, and would not permit even Madam Rensselaer at Albany, to use her own flour mill. He forbade the tanning of leather; ordered hides to be sent to Europe unmanufactured, and compelled the shoemakers to import shoes. This governor was a merchant himself, severe because he was avaricious."

"No money," says Slyter, "circulates among the people of this New York, who are almost all traders in small wares. They pay each other in wares, and are constantly defrauding one another." This was in 1680, under the English rulers of what had been New Netherland. At that time there were but two little hamlets upon Manhattan island, called New York and Harlem; between them lay a wilderness, full of game, of Indians, and even of wolves, as is shown by the following official document, a proclamation issued by Governor Dongan:

¹ "Upon the many complaints of the great mischief done by wolves on this Island of Manhatans, and at the request and desire of severall of the Inhabitants of the said Island that they may have liberty and lycense to hunt and distroy the same, these may certifye that Liberty & Lycense is hereby granted, to any of the Inhabitants of the said Island to hunt and distroy the s^d wolves, on Thursday next after the date hereof.

"Given under my hand, at Fort James, this 1st day of August, 1685.

"THOMAS DONGAN.

"Pass'd the office

J. E. SPRAGG, *Sec^y*."

What can have transformed this desolate island, within two hundred years, into the metropolis of today? Was it English thrift, or French vivacity; or was it the cosmopolitan instinct of Hollanders?

Our fatherland in the fullness of its power, had begun to develop itself along the borders of the New World, when European politics caused the transfer of the Dutch colonies to England before they were half a century old. They had, however, enough of Dutch blood and of the training of adversity, to make them the founders of a great city, and the builders of a powerful republic.

The thirteen colonies of the American revolutionary war, soon free and independent states, were peopled by men of Holland, and of those eastern shires of the Bri-

¹ *New York Colonial Manuscripts*, Dongan, 1686; vol. xxxiii, page 148. Secretary's office, Albany.

tish island which had been, for ages, largely settled by emigrants from the Low Countries. These men knew how to take care of themselves. They have moulded, by their wisdom, the growth of these United States into the firm consistency of a mighty nation; while Canada, cared for and cultivated by English statesmanship remains still, colonial Canada, having nothing of Dominion, but the name. England learned free government, popular education, how to print, and how to tolerate, from our fatherland. "Holland," said the eloquent Michelet, "was the bulwark, the universal refuge, and salvation, humanly speaking, of the human race." The Dutch Northman taught the Saxon, liberty, and from the earliest times practised its rites at home.

But whence came these Dutch Northmen?

Far back in the misty days of tradition, a brave conquering race of hardy pagans are said to have come from the distant east, into the marshy countries about the mouth of the Rhine. Next, they are heard of as fusing, after a while, into leagues of tribes. These Normans were part of those Aryan races, whose descent points directly to the Scriptural history of the dispersion of the nations, in the plains of SHINAR. Expelled by repeated overflowings of the sea, men from marshy regions, came in open boats without sails, to the coasts of England. Then the Coranians, coming from a land called by the Romans *the land of marshes*, swarmed along the banks of the river Humber and upon the fenny lowlands adjacent. Before the beginning of our Christian era, these people had settled thickly the eastern coast

of Britain, and they welcomed and assisted Cæsar when he landed in Kent, A. D. 55. In the beginning of the ninth century the Low Countries were invaded by *Northmen* who overran the country, and absorbing and intermarrying with the Menapians they found there, remained masters of the land. Heriold, a Danish viking, reigned in Walkeren, A. D. 841. Three Norman chiefs, Roland, Eggard, and Roruc, were the first three counts of Zeeland, and henceforth their Norman followers became the *Hollanders* of history.

“Two centuries later,” says old Peter Heylin, “Flanders was so overflowed, in the time of Henry II, about A. D. 1170, that many thousands of people, whose dwellings the sea had devoured, came over into England. There had already been a swarming over into Yorkshire and Northumberland in the year eleven hundred and eleven. Many had settled in Ross and Pembrokeshire, but most of these refugees sought the marshy country near the Humber.” In Lincolnshire, the south-east division, or third, is still called *Holland*, and its name furnished the title of Baron Holland given in 1763, to Henry Fox, brother of Charles James Fox. The fens of Lincolnshire were dyked and drained by Dutch emigrants from a land which they had been accustomed to protect from the ocean by dykes, and to render fit for tillage by the same methods which they afterwards practised in the eastern part of England.

It is then, a matter of established history, that successive colonies of Netherlanders had taken refuge, in early days, on the eastern coasts of Britain. They pene-

trated far inland into Huntingdon and Essex. We shall see that the minds which have directed the growth of English freedom, both religious and civil, had their origin in the eastern shires of England, and were, therefore, formed and nerved by their Hollandish parentage.¹

John Bunyan, born in 1628, lived and wrote in Bedford, not far from Bedford level, that fenny region of four hundred thousand acres which Dutch industry had long been reclaiming. Bedford level includes that portion of Lincoln still called Holland. In Bedford jail, where with the *Bible* and Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* for his only library, John Bunyan lay twelve years, that immortal allegory, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, was written.

John Foxe, too, the author of that *Book of Martyrs*, whence Bunyan drew so much of his inspiration, and whence so many arguments for freedom have been derived, was born in 1517, at Boston in Lincolnshire;

¹*John Hampden*, although born in London, was the son of Elizabeth Cromwell, of Huntingdon, sister of Oliver.

Fairfax, was born in 1611, at Denton in Yorkshire.

Ireton, who married Oliver Cromwell's daughter, was born in Nottinghamshire, near Lincolnshire, in 1610.

Sir Harry Vane, who visited New England, represented Kingston upon Hull in parliament in 1640, and was beheaded, June 14, 1662, was born in 1612, at Hadlow in Kent.

Lord William Russell, the martyr of English liberty, was born at Bedford in 1639, represented Bedfordshire in Parliament, and was beheaded by Charles II, in 1683.

Algernon Sidney, of the blood of Sir Philip Sidney, one of the noblest of English patriots and statesmen, who was beheaded, like Lord Russell, for liberty's sake, blameless of crime, and noble in every sense, was also a native of the eastern coasts of England, Penshurst in Kent, born in 1622, the second son of Robert Earl of Leicester.

the very seat and centre both of the early Dutch settlements in Britain, and of the nonconformist agitations which resulted in the colonization of Boston in New England.

Oliver Cromwell, born at Huntingdon, in 1599, in the same north-eastern quarter of England, comes first into notice as a country gentleman opposing certain illegal and oppressive schemes of the king, for draining the fens, with which, on account of his long residence at Ely, on the southerly part of Bedford level, he was familiar.

At Norwich, also near the eastern shores of Britain, *Robert Brown*, in 1580, formed a Congregational church, on democratic principles, but was soon forced by repeated arrests, at the instance of Dr. Freake, bishop of Norwich, to take refuge in Holland. Returning in 1589, he became the founder of the Brownists, who under the name of Independents, soon grew into a very numerous and influential body of protestant Christians.

Queen Elizabeth brought over four thousand immigrants from the Low Countries into Norwich, about the year 1580.

In the famous *Domesday Book*, which is an inventory of all taxable men and things in England, made by William the Conqueror, in the year 1086, there occur in the eastern shires, bordering upon the North sea, many names familiar in Puritan annals—such as, Piperell, Pomerei, Marshall, Baldwin, Cotham, Warrene, Riviere, Draiton, Coggeshall, and the like. At the end of almost every line in *Domesday Book* relating to Liu-

coln, Huntingdon and Cambridge shires, there occurs the explanatory word, *marex, merse, mora*, that is to say, *marsh* or *fen*, and the rent in that part of the country is chiefly reserved to be paid in eels.

Lincoln, Huntingdon and Cambridge shires adjoin Yorkshire and Nottingham, and lie together upon the North sea, and along the banks of the rivers Humber and Ouse, which drain the north-eastern part of the British island. Here Bancroft fixes the birth place and origin of the Puritans, and tells us that their secret place of meeting was an unfrequented heath in Lincolnshire, near the mouth of the Humber, whence in 1608, they fled to Holland. The pilgrim fathers were then children of those Netherlandish Northmen,¹ who had gone over to eastern Britain; the same Northmen with whom, as we have seen, the native Menapians in the Low Countries had combined and intermingled so as to form one race. The independent courage which led the Puritans to forsake all for the sake of enjoying the liberty of unforced conscience, came not, therefore, from the Anglo-Saxon spirit—a spirit which Hume, himself a Saxon, calls *abject*—the Puritan daring and enterprise were rather the old Viking fire. The Norman race, moulded by the steady industry which constant strife against the encroachments of the sea, made necessary to those who dwelt in the Netherlands,

¹“To the Hollandish element we must trace an exploit whose glories are all appropriated by the Puritans of our New England Boston; yes, it was Hollandish resolution which threw overboard the tea in Boston harbor.”—*J. Watts de Peyster*.

became plodding and industrious; they ceased, after a while, to rove; instead of piratical galleys, Northmen in Holland began to build Dutch galliots. In the lapse of generations, as Dutchmen, they have become that remarkable nation whose children have planted letters, liberty and the arts around the habitable earth. Da Costa, an accomplished student of the sagas and literature of the Northmen, denies that we ought to be proud of our Saxon inheritance. To the Northmen he refers that vital energy, freedom of thought, and strength of speech that belong to us.¹

Long ago, in the marshy lands of the Low countries among the homes of the men that formed the free state of the Forest People, as they loved to call themselves, fourteen centuries before our times, Northmen, as we have seen, laid the foundations of Holland. These Northmen were not Franks, but were Scandinavian in their origin—a brilliant and vigorous race which conquered the Franks, and next overcame the English.

But to the Northmen we Americans owe more than we have been accustomed to believe; for, nine hundred years ago, out of Iceland came Eric, who in the year 935, visited Greenland. In the year of our Lord, 1000,

¹ *The Northmen*.—The world looks upon the English as the most perfect types of the Anglo-Saxon race. The Netherlanders exhibit a much finer combination of the Saxon and Scandinavian or Norman.—*History of the Menapii*, p. 35, by Gen. J. Watts de Peyster.

It is impossible to admire too highly the ardent patriotism with which Gen. de Peyster, has gathered facts bearing upon the honor of the old fatherland, or to praise sufficiently the admirable learning with which, in his *Carausius, Menapii, Dutch at the North Pole*, and in many other treatises, he has made good his positions.

Leif, son of Eric, entered Mount Hope bay, and spent some time in what is now the state of Rhode Island,—so the Icelandic sagas tell us, and their narratives are confirmed and repeated by the *Domesday Book* of Iceland, called *Landnama Bök*. *Landnama Bök* contains the names of three thousand persons and fourteen hundred places; gives an account of the genealogy of the first Icelandic settlers, with brief notices of their history and achievements, and extends from A. D. 1067 to A. D. 1334. It is of the same character and authority as the English *Domesday*. Palfrey, in his *History of New England*, says of these Icelandic records, that their antiquity and genuineness appear to be well established. Humboldt admits their authenticity. There are monuments, too, bearing Runic words still intelligible, which have been found in Greenland, and which curiously preserve the memory of the Northmen. One remarkable stone was found by Captain Parry, the English arctic voyager, in the island of Kingiktorsoak, in 1824. Copies of the inscription found upon this stone, were sent to three eminent Danish scholars, Finn Magnusson, Professor Rask, and Dr. Bryniulfson who, without conferring together, separately gave this translation: “Erling Sighvatson, and Biorn Thordarson, and Eindrid Oddson, on Saturday before Ascension week, raised these marks, and cleared ground, 1135.”¹

Some interesting corrections of received history have been made necessary by the chronology of the Icelandic

¹ Da Costa's *Pre-Columbian Discovery of America by Northmen*.

annals. It has been claimed, for example, that the first bishop who ever trod the soil of the United States of America, was Fr: Juan Xuarez, who had been consecrated a bishop at the time of the expedition of Pamphilo de Narvaez to Florida, in 1527. But three distinct series of Icelandic annals relate that Bishop Eric, bishop of Greenland, visited Mount Hope bay in Rhode Island in the year 1121, four hundred years earlier than Fr: Juan Xuarez.

In a miscellaneous collection of Icelandic manuscripts, called *Gripla*, there is a geography. After mentioning Norway and other countries, the manuscript gives this recital, which is in some degree interesting to the St. Nicholas Society: "From Biarme-land lie desert places, all Northward to the land which is called Greenland. *Gardar*, the Bishop's seat, is at the bottom of Eric's fiord. There, is a church consecrated to *Holy Nicholas*. There are twelve churches in the Eastern settlements, and four in the Western." From these annals it is ascertained that the church at *Gardar*, the cathedral or bishop's seat, was established by Arnold, successor of Bishop Eric Gnupson, in the year 1126. Seventeen bishops succeeded him, and the last, Bishop Andrew, went thither in 1408, and was never heard of afterwards. The first Christian church, in this western world was, therefore, dedicated to the patron saint of Holland, our good *Saint Nicholas*. It is fair, also, to claim for Northmen, the honor of having discovered and explored the shores of New England, more than three centuries before Columbus saw the Bahama islands.

We have compared the fatherland of 1609 with the feeble beginnings of her colonies here at the same period. We have, also, fresh in our memories the present condition of the Netherlands. We are conscious of our own national vigor. Perhaps the quick yet solid prosperity of this new world, had some root and cause in the example and influence of Holland.

The commerce of New York that began with a single sloop, the little *Onrust*, has come, within two hundred and fifty years, to be reckoned by thousands of tons. The price once paid for the fee of all Manhattan island (twenty-four dollars), now represents in the number 24 very nearly the number of millions we raise as a yearly tax.

McCormick brings the wheat of all the prairies, by his labor-saving reapers, within reach of our seaboard market. Howe gives cheap clothing to millions of people, by his sewing machines. The iron railway, after piercing the Isthmus of Darien, has crossed the *undiscovered regions* of our school maps, and to-day, brings to Manhattan fresh fruit and the rarities of India, within a week, from the far Pacific. The wondrous printing press, besides its magical work as the messenger of thought, now, clad in colors, places in beautiful chromos, works of art upon the walls of the humblest cottage.

Architecture, at the same moment, in Holland and in France, creates the artificial block of stone; huge, Titanic, to beat back the sea storms at Velsem or Suez, or moulds graceful tracery, fit for a gothic chapel, in a single monolith.

The earth is astir with the hum of busy men; men vanquishing the obstacles which nature seems to have set up only against the happiness of the lazy and ignorant. The Alps are pierced by vast tunnels pushed far into the bowels of the rock, where no ventilation can come, but by condensed air, which at the same moment drives the engines that work the drills, and gives breath to the workmen. All this is done by Swiss engineers, bred by the same method of public school education which has filled our Patent office with American inventions.

Steam navigation, railways, telegraphs, overland and beneath the seas, have been reserved for our days, only because universal education was not sooner accomplished. An unlettered people could not use or understand such things. Who could send telegrams if letters were not taught everywhere? Would cheap postage be possible until everybody had learned to write; or until steam machinery had made paper and steel pens abundant? Where could men be found able to construct the locomotives, or to work the railways and the steamers, had not scientific instruction been made accessible to the poorest by common schools?

To Holland we owe the TELESCOPE, an invention which for its influence upon the welfare of mankind, must be ranked next to the printing press. *Zacharias Janssens*, a Zeelander, gave to Galileo the telescope.¹ Its applica-

¹ *The Telescope*.—* * * If the conquering ships of Holland had not guarded, in the farthest island of Europe, the asylum of human thought, you would have had neither *Shakspeare* nor *Bacon*, nor

tion to meridian instruments has made navigation accurate, and its power over the starry heavens has added a new faculty to the astronomer. Janssens, too, devised for naturalists the microscope, that marvellous application of optics to common things which promises to elevate medicine from an art to the dignity of a science, and imparts confidence and certainty to what had been merely the conjectures of physiology.

Such are a few of the wonderful benefits which the little grammar of Laurence Koster through the common schools created by printing, has bestowed upon the human race. Let us always remember that Holland established the first national schools and has continued to the present hour to develop and improve them, until they hold under instruction one-eighth of the entire population of the country. No narrow sectarianism ever invaded the educational institutions of our fatherland.¹ No weak mistakes about *parochial schools*, under the exclusive management of religious ministers, and maintained at the expense of the state, were made there. Our founders went further; they followed the counsel of the great reformer, and rendered the teaching of children compulsory. "Ah!" said Luther, in 1554,

Harvey nor *Des Cartes*, *Rembrandt*, *Spinoza*, *Galileo*; yes, I say, *Galileo*, since the telescope from Holland, opened to him the skies.—*Michelet's Guerres de Religion*.

¹*John Wier*, exposed the delusions of witchcraft, and pointed out that the demon had seized, not the bewitched but the judges. While they were drowning witches in Old and New England alike, the absurdity of the delusion had been thoroughly shown in Holland, where superstition found few votaries.

“if a state in time of war can oblige its citizens to take up the sword and the musket, has it not still more the power, and is it not its duty to compel them to instruct their children, since we are all engaged in a more serious warfare, urged with the spirit of evil which rages in our midst, seeking to depopulate the state of virtuous men? It is my desire, above all things else, that every child should go to school, or be sent there by a magistrate.”

It has been reserved for our days to discover the evil of free public instruction for all the children of a state. We see in the full light of the brilliant progress the world is making toward universal freedom and happiness, by means of popular education, the leaders of a numerous denomination of Christians doing their best to stop our public schools. “We hold,” say these modest men, “education to be a function of the church and not of the state, and we will not accept the state as educator.” All teaching of youth, except by priests of a sectarian creed, is now condemned and forbidden by the highest ecclesiastical authority; and our free school system is to be broken down, in order that we may go back to the good old monkish days when as yet no grammars or geographies or arithmetics had been printed, to disturb the orthodoxy of an ignorant people.

In a letter sent by MOTLEY to the St. Nicholas Society, explaining his absence from our festival in 1868, the great historian speaks of “*Our universal system of education—the only conceivable basis of democratic government,*” and says, “It is very pleasant to reflect that the New England pilgrims, during their residence in the glorious

country of your ancestry, found already established there, a system of schools which John of Nassau, eldest brother of William the Silent, had recommended in these words: 'You must urge upon the States General that they should establish free schools, where children of quality as well as of poor families, for a very small sum, could be well and Christianly educated and brought up. This would be the greatest and most useful work you could ever accomplish for God and Christianity, and for the Netherlands themselves. Soldiers and patriots thus educated with a true knowledge of God, and a Christian conscience, also churches and schools, books and printing presses, are better than all armies, armories, alliances and treaties that can be had, or imagined in the world.' This was the feeling about popular education in the Netherlands during the 16th century. Can we wonder that it gave the little Republic strength to battle with despotism, and have not the great 'soldiers and patriots thus educated' in our own Republic, proved the wisdom of John of Nassau's advice to the Hollanders?"

The first printed book, Koster's first essay, when he clumsily put together his movable wooden types at Harlem, in 1423, was most appropriately, a grammar — a book for children. Such was the beginning of that godlike art, which renders thought divine by making it audible to reason's ear, and visible to the mind's eye; which preserves ideas, in spite of time and distance, and places the creations of mortal genius quite beyond the power of death.

Such was the forging of the lever which has moved the entire world; for the child's grammar was the germ of the common school, and made Martin Luther formidable, because his *Theses* could be read. Then the types gave the BIBLE to common men, and bestowed upon whole communities *the benefit of clergy*.

Holland, a mere corner of a morass, became by the force of intellect and courage, a terror and then a *teacher* to England and to Europe. God's blessing rested upon our forefathers in their little home, forbidding, and full of hard work, but dear to them because won and kept by honest toil.

From Amsterdam has grown Manhattan; from the seven United Provinces have come our own thirty-six United States of America. In the words of Horace, married to verse no less immortal, by our English Milton:

The power that did create, can change the scene
Of things, make mean of great, and great of mean;
The brightest glory can eclipse with night,
And place the most obscure in dazzling light.

Having now given some attention to one of the constitutional duties of our society, which is "to collect and preserve information respecting the history, manners, etc., of the city of New York," in the enquiries we have just made as to the founders of New York, we ought not to forget to look into the early practices of our forefathers, in the way of festive meetings. The Dutch-

men of Manhattan were in the habit of honoring our patron saint, long before the St. Nicholas Society was formed. The first notable gathering on record, is commemorated in *Rivington's Gazetteer* of Thursday, December 23d, 1773, in the following paragraph:

“New York, December 23d.—Last Monday the anniversary of St. Nicholas, otherwise called Santa Claus, was celebrated at Protestant Hall, at Mr. Waldron's; where a great number of the sons of that ancient saint celebrated the day with great joy and festivity.” *Waldron's*, was a noted ferry-house, or tavern, on the Brooklyn side, where New Yorkers were wont to resort for good cheer, in those days, and where great doings took place in honor of the repeal of the stamp act.

In *Rivington's Gazetteer* of Thursday December 8th, 1774, is a notice, that “Monday next, being the anniversary of St. Nicholas, will be celebrated by the descendants of the ancient Dutch families.” The *Gazetteer* for the next week is unfortunately missing from the file in the Society library, nor is there any report of the dinner of 1774, extant. If these worthy descendants of the Dutch, celebrated the 6th of December as their festival day, as we do, it is difficult to understand how the *Gazetteer* of Thursday, December 8th, 1774, could speak of Monday *next*, which would be December 12th, as the anniversary of St. Nicholas. But probably Rivington did not pay much attention to chronology, and inserted such notices whenever he had enough of them to make up a column, and not sooner.

The next festival of which there survives any account, was the remarkable one of December 6, 1810, when the Historical Society, in compliment to the original settlers of this state, selected the festival of St. Nicholas (usually pronounced Santa Claus), the tutelar saint of the Dutch for their anniversary discourse and dinner. It is worthy of remark, that the Historical Society has continued the discourse, without the dinner; and our St. Nicholas Society, during its more recent history, has adhered to the dinner without the anniversary address. The Historical Society accordingly assembled on Thursday, 6th Dec., 1810, at one o'clock, in the north court room in the City Hall, where they listened to an excellent occasional discourse by Hugh Williamson, for which he received the thanks of the society, with the request of a copy for publication. At four, p. m., the society reassembled at the Washington Hotel (Kent's, 42 Broad street), where a table was most sumptuously spread for them, by Kent in his best manner, both as to choice wines and delicate viands. Seventeen toasts were duly honored; Egbert Benson presided, and a full and true account of all the proceedings has been preserved by John Pintard, then librarian of the society, which account has been reproduced in *fac simile* by Mr. George H. Moore, his excellent successor. Our St. Nicholas Society, as we have seen, formerly commemorated the day by an address, as well as by a dinner. After a long interval, we renew, to-day, our ancient custom.

Long may the Feast of St. Nicholas live with pleasant memories among all true children of that grand old

people, whose help timid Britons used to invoke against their foes, and never in vain.¹ Whether the Scots and Picts were to be driven back, or the Spanish armada to be kept away from England, Dutchmen were the friends in need, that saved Britain in the day of extremity.²

The Netherlanders have ever been the successful foes of Romanism and of despotism. We now know, that but for the valor and intelligence of our forefathers, England would have been a Spanish province, and these United States, French colonies. Therefore, the eye of every one who speaks the English tongue, should kindle with joy and pride whenever he hears

¹ Augustin Thierry, *History of the Norman Conquest*, p. 4.

² The Spanish Armada on the 6th of August, 1588, arrived off Calais to take on board its commander-in-chief, the Duke of Parma, who, with forty thousand soldiers and three hundred transport ships, had long been ready to invade England, as soon as the Hollanders would permit him to do it. For the Dutch navy, under Admiral Van der Does, prevented the Spaniards from coming out.

Within two hours sail of Dover, the Armada lay vainly waiting many days, held by the valor of the Dutch, who kept watch between the Spanish fleet, at anchor off the land, and the flotilla of Parma in the harbors, canals and rivers behind Dunkirk and Newport. Van der Does found himself between two great Spanish armaments and successfully opposed both.

On the 6th of August, 1588, there was no English army in the field, nor did Queen Elizabeth review her troops, until eleven days afterward, when, so far from having any thing to fear from the Spanish invaders, they had been tempest-tost fugitives, for a week. On the 6th of August, says Motley, "no army had assembled, not even the body guard of the Queen. On the 6th of August, the Armada was in Calais roads, expecting Alexander Farnese to lead his troops upon London."

The duke of Parma was kept a close prisoner by the fleets of Holland and Zeeland, and the great storm of the 14th and 15th August, at last completed the overthrow of the Spaniards. But for the valor

the name of Holland; remembering that the honest blood of the Dutch sea tamers warms the heart of many a man who ignorantly claims feebler lineage.

of the Netherlanders, which delayed the operations of the Armada until the delay became a defeat, the protestant cause would have been lost. As with the Huguenots in France, the light of the reformed faith would have been put out in England, and that Puritan light to which we owe so much in America, would never have been kindled.

Firmly, steadily, the Dutch mariners held on. Parma had relied upon the Invincible Armada to clear the way for him. "He is," said Admiral Drake, "as a bear robbed of her whelps." His attempts to break through the lines of Zeeland boatmen were frantic, but vain. His forlorn hope was slain to the last man, and soon that storm arose which sent the huge war ships and galleys of Medina Sidonia, "whirling round the Orkneys." The glory of saving Old England, and therefore of giving freedom of conscience to the New World belongs to HOLLAND.

APPENDIX.

Three remarkable lectures, on the ORIGIN OF THE ENGLISH NATION, by Edward A. Freeman, were read before the Literary and Philosophical Institution at Kingston-on-Hull, in January, 1870. They were thought worthy of being printed in *Macmillan's Magazine*. Mr. Freeman says:

“That great western migration of Low Dutch tribes to the west, which takes up the greater part of the fifth and sixth centuries, gave birth to the English nation.

* * * It is the Low Dutch part of us, which gives us our national being; our national character, our national history.

* * * Our relation to the Low Dutch is one of actual brotherhood. They are our bone and our flesh; their blood is our blood; their speech is our speech, modified only by the different influences which have, in the nature of things, affected the two severed branches of the race, during a separation of fourteen hundred years.”—*Macmillan's Magazine*, No. 125, March, 1870. Macmillan & Co., 16 Bedford St., Covent Garden. London and Cambridge.

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