The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE


Founded by Edward C. Hegeler.

VICTORY OF SAMOTHRACE (RESTORED).
Representative of Ancient Greek Art.

The Open Court Publishing Company

CHICAGO

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A group of brief philosophical problems in blank verse on the themes "Truth," "Time," "Love" and "Death," and also a longer poem "De Rerum Natura," divided into three parts: (1) The Problem; (2) The Soul; (3) The All. The last poem, "Death," contains these lines:

"Traditions of parental past are we,
Handing the gain of our expanding souls
Down to succeeding ages which we build.
The lives of predecessors live in us
And we continue in the race to come.
Thus in the Eleusinian Mysteries
A burning torch was passed from hand to hand,
And every hand was needed in the chain
To keep the holy flame aglow—the symbol
Of spirit-life, of higher aspirations."

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ARISTOPHANES.

Frontispiece to The Open Court.
THE POSITION OF HOLLAND IN THE EUROPEAN WAR.

BY ALBERT OOSTERHEERT.

The position of Holland in the great European war is both a difficult and a delicate one. In the center almost of the conflict, related to the principal warring nations by ties of blood, commerce and trade, herself an exponent of international law, which it is charged from many sides has been rudely broken, suffering greatly from the effects of the war in her trade, industry and general condition, compelled in addition to relieve a multitude of refugees, Holland has, though neutral, a most unenviable position, incurring nearly all the evil results of war without experiencing at the same time that national exaltation which is often a complement of it. Officially, of course, the Netherlands are neutral, and, as far as the government is concerned, this neutrality has been admirably kept, nor have the people at large been committing overt acts of hostility toward any of the powers involved; but it would be idle to assume that the Dutch are wholly without sympathies in this war, or that they alone have attained that state of philosophic calm which seems an absolute requirement for a complete neutrality.

The ties of blood and racial origin alone make the position of the Dutch peculiarly difficult. One of the purest Germanic nations, although not without a strong admixture of Roman blood, speaking an almost entirely Teutonic language, which is perhaps a better development of the ancient German than the modern German with its artificial constructions and ponderous word-formations, the Dutch have at all times been an outpost of das Deutschtum, of equal rank with the other nations of Teutonic extraction. Part
and parcel of Germanic civilization, their relations with Belgium, and especially Brabant and Flanders, populated by the Flemish people, practically of the same stock and using the same language, have been particularly close. Formerly, when the seventeen Netherlands provinces were united under the scepter of Charles V, only to be driven apart during the reign of his son Philip II, there existed the most intimate relationship between Belgium and Holland, two parts indeed of one country. From the southern Netherlands the northern provinces derived much, in fact nearly all of that which afterwards made the Dutch Republic famous in art, industry, trade and commerce. When the southern Netherlands were subdued by Don Juan of Spain and Alexander of Parma, the trade and commerce of the great Flemish cities were moved almost bodily to Amsterdam and the other cities of Holland and Zealand, which owe their growth and industry in great part to the Flemish artisans, weavers, merchants and bankers who came fleeing from Antwerp and Flanders after the Spanish fury of 1585 had done its fearful work in that city. Henceforth the connection between the two Netherlands is broken, and Holland profits at the expense of Belgium. The political separation is accentuated by the religious and commercial antagonism; the northern Netherlands wax great and mighty, the southern Netherlands lead a miserable existence under foreign domination.

This condition lasts for two centuries, and is ended by the effects of the great French revolution. France wrests Belgium from Austria, while, soon after, the Dutch republic comes to an inglorious end in 1795, the Prince of Orange taking refuge in England, and Holland as well as Belgium falling under French domination. The fall of Napoleon sees both countries once more united; to Holland, already independent in 1813, Belgium is added in 1815, at the command of the Vienna Congress. The union, although quite promising at first, comes to naught in 1830, when the clerical and liberal parties of Belgium form an alliance, set up a revolutionary government and defy the northern provinces and the king. An attempt by the Dutch government to suppress the revolt culminated in the famous "Ten Days' Campaign," at the end of which all Belgium lay at the feet of the victorious Dutch army. At this juncture, however, foreign powers intervened; both England and France assumed a threatening attitude, and by means of a French army compelled Holland to relinquish her hold upon Belgium. A long period of suspense followed, to be concluded finally by the neutrality treaty of 1839, signed by Great Britain,
France, Russia, the Germanic Confederation, and Belgium and Holland themselves.

The first period of Belgian independence was necessarily very French in spirit and culture, thereby suppressing the old national character of Flanders and Brabant. A natural reaction followed, in which the ancient Flemish verse and prose regained their former preeminence—a new period of youthful vigor and noble expression in the old language of the people. The connection with Holland, never entirely lost, became more intimate as the literatures of both countries became the common property of each. Many strands of different kinds continued to form an almost indissoluble link between the two peoples, not least of which was the General Dutch Alliance (Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond). Little wonder then that Dutch sympathy for Belgium in this war is ardent and sincere, and that the manifestations of charity and esteem have been universal and full throughout the whole of Holland. As indicative of Dutch feeling toward unhappy Belgium the following quotations from Neerlandia, the official organ of the General Dutch Alliance, which has its members in every civilized country in the world, will be found illuminating. Editorially, Neerlandia says: "Being published in a neutral country, Neerlandia must also be neutral. As Holland does not share in the fighting, the Dutch people must, both in speech and writing, withhold itself from making attacks. But as far as Belgium is concerned—for the major part inhabited by a people of Dutch race and Dutch language, accordingly, from the view-point of our Alliance and Neerlandia, inhabited by our race—we must, in all calmness and sincerity, utter a word of protest against this invasion.

"In fact, Germany herself has, in the utterances of her chancellor, admitted that she was doing Belgium an injustice. We do not enter here into an inquiry as to which power or which group of powers bears the blame for the outbreak of this world-wide war. We also do not raise the question whether Germany has good reasons for saying that she fights for her existence and not for conquest, and that she was compelled in self-defense to go through Belgium; willingly or unwillingly, she committed injustice.

"But we have confidence in the German people. They will, in case they are victorious, make amends and rectify what they have done to Belgium. And they will leave the country its freedom and independence. When the anger and the fever of war have passed they will have admiration and respect for the small nation which was too proud to allow invasion of its territory, and which,
in defense of its honor and independence, dared to fight with a powerful enemy. And they will understand that the Dutch nation, although it remains firmly neutral, sympathizes with the heroic Belgian nation, in part a related nation, and gives expression to its admiration and pity.”

In perfect agreement with the thought and sentiment of this noble protest has been the hospitality and treatment accorded to the hundreds of thousands of Belgian refugees in Holland. The government itself has done everything possible for these poor people, and besides the national fund for home charity another fund has been devoted exclusively to the Belgians. While greatly suffering herself, Holland has nobly responded to this additional burden, refusing to receive the proffered aid of Great Britain and America to help in caring for the thousands of destitute Belgians. A duty voluntarily undertaken would be fulfilled in the spirit in which it was begun; this and national patriotism urged the government to reject these otherwise welcome offers of aid. That the Belgians have appreciated this generosity and unlimited hospitality on the part of Holland, which dispelled forever the unjust suspicions held against the Dutch in the beginning of the war, may be conclusively seen from an address to Queen Wilhelmina, sent by two Flemish representatives in the Belgian parliament and signed by many prominent refugees and others. The text of this eloquent address is too long to quote in full, but a translation of part of it will indicate its fervent feeling and heartfelt gratitude. “Not only,” says the address, “have tens of thousands of Belgians to thank Holland for the preservation of their very lives, but also for their re-quickened faith in life and humanity….. Through her magnanimous love of humanity has Holland, in these days, gained more than a battle of arms. She has earned the eternal gratitude of a sister nation, compelled the admiration of all combatants and brought upon herself a blessing from on high.”

While bleeding Belgium is thus a recipient of Dutch (and American) bounty, the relations of Holland with the other combatant nations are no less close and essential. Germany, as might be expected, looms very large in the Dutch consciousness. From Germany their language and customs are derived, the royal house of Orange is of German descent, as are also many Dutch citizens whose forefathers fled to the Netherlands during the religious wars in Germany, or who themselves are of more recent immigration;

2 Neerlandia, Nov. 1914, page 208.
much of their science, philosophy and arts is of German importation, while the phenomenal growth of their commerce, industry and trade within the last forty years has been in great part due to the equally remarkable development of Germany in the same period. In the great exodus of foreigners out of Germany at the beginning of the war the Dutch took little or no part; even more than the Americans they were honored and trusted by the Germans. While there was a fear in Holland at first that they would be drawn into the war, events have shown that Holland has nothing, for the present at least, to fear from Germany. The Germans have scrupulously respected Dutch neutrality, firmly as it has been kept. After the fall of Antwerp there was a great temptation to Germany to take possession of the mouth of the Scheldt, an undertaking which would certainly have resulted in war with the Dutch. But as England had refrained from sending her warships up the Scheldt, so Germany refrained from doing anything which would violate Dutch neutrality.

The Netherlands have grievances enough, however, against both England and Germany. Dutch trade is well-nigh suspended, thanks to the ubiquitous use of mines by these great powers. As the English admiralty board has declared, the entire North Sea is dangerous to shipping, greatly to the detriment and loss of the Scandinavian countries and Holland, thus illustrating the direct loss and danger to neutral lands in this most sanguinary war. At Rotterdam, where sixty boats normally enter port daily, there are now only a few steamers docking, and there is thus an almost total cessation of commerce and trade, making it difficult even to procure sufficient foodstuffs from abroad. Thanks to the energetic action of the Dutch government there is no famine in the land, all hoarding of grain being strictly forbidden, and in many communes it is being sold under the direct control of the government. While there is not, and cannot be, a comparison with conditions in Belgium, there is acute distress and a serious condition of affairs, which cannot be allowed to last indefinitely.

That the Dutch are among the principal sufferers from the war may easily be inferred from the fact of their being, for their population, the greatest commercial and trading nation on earth. In actual exports and imports the Netherlands are only exceeded by Great Britain, France, Germany, and the United States. With one-seventh of the population, Holland has a total foreign commerce nearly equal to that of France, with one-tenth of Germany's millions, more than one-half her trade. According to the Statistical
Abstract of the United States for 1911 French imports and exports for the year 1910 amounted to $1,384,453,000 and $1,203,124,000, respectively; those of Germany, $2,126,322,000 and $1,778,969,000; the British figures are $3,300,738,000 and $2,094,467,000; and the American, $1,527,966,000 and $2,013,549,000; while the imports of little Holland in 1909 were $1,249,423,000, and her exports $984-397,000, amazing totals for such a small country of but six million inhabitants. It is true, of course, that this marvelous foreign trade is to a great extent a carrying trade and does not represent the country's industry accurately, but it indicates emphatically the dominant trading character of the Dutch nation and the absolute necessity of keeping open the great trade-routes and neutral waters. That the principles of international law have been violated by the indiscriminate sowing of mines in the North Sea is indisputable, and that Holland, already handicapped by the great war at her borders, has thus innocently been deprived in great part of her main source of making a living, is equally beyond cavil or doubt.

It is, indeed, one of the tragic ironies of this war that the countries which have been among the foremost defenders of international law and justice have also been cruelly suffering because of their violation. Belgium, whose very existence depends on the inviolability of an international treaty, herself the creation of the great powers of Europe, has seen her life-blood slowly ebbing away in defense of it; Holland, the home of world-jurisprudence, whose great son, Hugo de Groot, laid the foundations of international law in his famous book, De Jure Belli ac Pacis, the seat of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague, where it has its quarters in the Palace of Peace—the most hopeful building of modern times—has seen her trade and industry paralyzed in defiance of her neutrality; both countries victims, albeit not in the same degree, of a cruel war which they were powerless to prevent. The Netherlands certainly did not deserve the fate meted out to them, for no country has done more for international comity and justice than Holland. As Motley says on this subject: "To the Dutch Republic, even more than to Florence at an earlier day, is the world indebted for practical instruction in that great science of political equilibrium which must always become more and more important as the various states of the civilized world are pressed more closely together, and as the struggle for preeminence becomes more feverish and fatal." It is on this account that the neutral

nations like Holland and the United States will have much to say as to the final terms of peace. There can be no lasting peace which leaves neutrality undefined and unprotected, which does not limit the scope and area of a conflict, or which does not prevent the visitation of war upon innocent nations.

It is a matter of uncommon interest to Holland that the positions of the great neighboring powers with respect to her have apparently completely changed from what they were historically. Thus for centuries France was the most dangerous enemy of the Netherlands, and the famous Barrière in the southern Netherlands was directed against her possible sudden attack, just as the Triple Alliance between England, Holland and the Emperor during the eighteenth century was for the purpose of checking the ambitious designs of France. In this war, however, Holland and France have no differences, the Dutch having no fear from the French, while Germany and England, formerly Holland’s protectors against France, have become menacing to Dutch interests. England, to be sure, has not always been friendly to the Dutch, as the three wars in the period between 1650 and 1674 clearly indicate, but otherwise Dutch and English interests were by no means mutually exclusive, but rather parallel, if not quite identical. The Dutch war for independence from Spain was greatly aided by England’s fight in behalf of a common Protestantism, which required the undivided support of both maritime powers in order to win against a recrudescence Catholicism, as personified in the house of Hapsburg. A century later, when William of Orange had become king of England, the alliance between England and Holland was formed, which, together with their common alliance with the emperor, was, as Professor Blok terms it, “a political and economical necessity.”

At present, however, England has at least temporarily endangered the existence of Holland, although she claims of course that her measures are purely defensive, and necessary as counteracting the offensive naval tactics of Germany. That England should desire a permanent foothold on the continent, for example at the mouth of the Scheldt, is strongly to be doubted. Such a position would be precarious to hold, and it would ensure the lasting enmity of Holland as well as of Germany. It is equally improbable, however, that Germany would care to lord it over the Dutch, or annex their country. The Germans know too well the history and character of the Dutch, and have always been too friendly to them to doom them to national extinction. It is quite possible, however, that Germany and the Netherlands will be somewhat more closely
related after the war than before, and that the Dutch will prefer the friendship and protection of powerful Germany rather than her possible distrust, and perhaps conquest at her hands. That the Dutch race, whether in Holland or Flanders, will draw nearer together, is already certain. Of one other thing the world may be certain, that Holland wishes "heroic Belgium restored to the fulness of her material life and her political independence," as Premier Viviani has stated, "that it may be possible to reconstruct, on a basis of justice, a Europe finally regenerated."