

WILHELMINA OF HOLLAND

KEES VAN HOEK

ON September 6th, 1898, a fair girl of eighteen, clad in a long white silken robe, an ermine-caped red velvet cloak embroidered with golden lions hanging royally from her slim shoulders, rose amidst the great of her land and the princes of her oriental empire, solemnly to swear allegiance to the Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. After eight years of minority, since the death of her father, she now became in fact what she had been in name from her tenth year: Queen in her own right.

Times change. This maxim must surely be pondered now by Queen Wilhelmina of Holland, *doyenne* of the ruling monarchs of the world. For the changes which she witnessed during her reign are so sweeping that one hardly believes the evidence of one's own eyes.

Revolutions chased the Kings of Portugal and Spain far from their countries. The Emperor of Germany, at the zenith of his power when she mounted her throne, has already been an exile in Holland now for half the time of her own reign; not a solitary ruler is left of that multitude of kings and grand dukes, princes and princelings, then wielding autocratic power, to-day already completely forgotten by their former subjects. The mighty Emperor Francis Joseph died, his country does not even exist any more, and there is a warrant out for the arrest of his heir. The Czar of Russia has been exterminated with his whole family. The King of Italy—of the only family which can compete with her House in age—barely holds his own by the tolerance of a popular dictator. Turkey dismissed its Sultan, and in place of the "Shadow of God on Earth" has come a General in a bowler hat, who turned his back to Europe and founded his own brand new capital in Asia Minor. Serbia, by an entirely local method, acquired a new dynasty. All Wilhelmina's other contemporaries on the thrones of the world forty years ago have since died; in London reigns the fourth successor to Queen Victoria, still on the throne at the beginning of Wilhelmina's own reign.

Even greater changes than the "Almanach de Gotha", the maps show. Norway separated from Sweden in mutual under-

standing, as grown-up people of culture do. Great Britain gave Eirè her freedom, and the other Dominions, among which a united South Africa had then not yet appeared. Poland was reborn, Finland became independent, and countries of which no one had ever suspected the existence—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—were carved out of the Russian cadaver. A brand-new Czechoslovakia, an aggrandized Yugoslavia, a terribly mutilated Hungary and an unnaturally swollen Rumania, became heirs to the Hapsburgs. Interminable Balkan quarrels made the puppet state of Albania possible.

Forty years ago there were on nineteen European states eighteen crowned heads (Germany sharing no fewer than four); to-day the face of Europe has been revolutionised into twenty-seven independent countries, with in all only twelve monarchies left.

“Safe in the Midst of the Waves” has been the motto of Wilhelmina’s House. Our momentous times underline its aptness. . . .

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The House of Orange-Nassau may claim to be the oldest family among reigning dynasties, since its origin can be traced as far back as the year 800. Nassaus settled in Holland in 1400, and a century later the Principality of Orange came into the family, through a French marriage. The first Prince of Orange-Nassau, young William, continued at the explicit wish of the Emperor Charles V, whose favourite he was, to reside in the Netherlands.

As William the Silent, he became the first ruler of an independent Holland, Father of the Fatherland. From him Wilhelmina descends, eleventh in a succession of seven Stadholders (as the hereditary Presidents of the Republic of the United Provinces were called in those days) and of three Kings. Four centuries of service by her family to her country are represented in her. Often the last hope of the dynasty was a small child. William III, the later King of England, was yet unborn when his father died, and on his birth solemnly proclaimed Holland’s “Child of State”. William V had to flee the country in the time of the French Revolution, but his son returned, carried through the surf by enthusiastic Scheveningen fishermen who could not await the landing of his boat. One King abdicated. The last King saw his wife, his three stalwart sons and his only brother die within a short span of years; remarrying, he became father again at the age of sixty-three, when tiny Wilhelmina was the last slender hope of an age-old dynasty, all but annihilated by the shocks of doom.

For providential survival her House certainly holds a unique record. And it holds this equally in a high average of capacity. It is certainly unparalleled for such a long ruling family never to have produced a single mediocrity. They were all men of outstanding ability, either as statesmen or as warriors, often as both. And though the shortsightedness of King William I's intolerant religious policy lost him Belgium—united to Holland by the Congress of Vienna—even his severest critics do not deny him great talents as a financier and an organiser, for he rebuilt Holland's prosperity after the ravages of French Revolution and Napoleonic wars.

Greatest of them all was, undoubtedly, William the Silent. His political career started at that Council of State in Brussels, on New Year's Eve 1564, when he spoke out his mind against his overlord, the King of Spain: "I can not admit that Kings rule over the conscience of their subjects, and that they can deny them freedom of religion." Such a rank heresy caused Viglius, the Chairman, a heart failure. But even though his successors—in centuries long persecution of Papists and Dissenters—did not live up to his example, in the long run his family swung back to its inherent wisdom. To-day, four centuries after his birth, he is far from a nebulous figure of the dim past; a shining example yet.

He and King-Stadholder William III are the favourite heroes of Queen Wilhelmina: one the great Hollander, the other the great European. It was a momentous day when the third William landed at Torbay, and during his first night on English soil slept in a Devon fisherman's hut, above which his princely standard proudly flew. In his harness and white plumed cap he rode on his charger from Newton Abbot to Exeter, from Exeter to Salisbury, from there to Windsor and finally to London, ousting James II with the people's consent. Hallam summed up the epos of his reign in his *Constitutional History of England*: "It must ever be an honour to the English Crown that it has been worn by so great a man." . . .

Wilhelmina succeeded to the throne under circumstances which were not altogether auspicious. Her father had reigned for forty-one years. He had undoubtedly many gifts, but his character had been far from exemplary. Rather unsteady and despotic (his mother was the daughter of a Czar of Russia), he had clashes with the rigid propriety of Dutch court circles, and even more so with the enlightened liberalism of cool and stolid Dutch politicians, which were inevitable. As his rages only made things worse, he withdrew in later years almost completely

from personal contacts, loaded on either side with misunderstanding and distrust. Ministers saw him only when they had to kiss hand on appointment—and even then he more than once received them sitting with his baby daughter on the floor of a study littered with toys! There is something pathetic in this picture, for he was a man of talents, and a personality.

When he died, the love and respect of the nation for the Crown had to be wooed anew. The Dowager Queen shoved forward with great tact her little daughter, "Orphan of the State," and thus began to rally around the ten years old Queen an affection which, as her character began to develop, turned into devoted love.

How she set about this great task, is shown by the historic anecdote which won the nation by storm. Ten years old, having just succeeded her father, Wilhelmina appeared for the first time on the balcony of the Royal Palace at Amsterdam, before the cheering multitude of her subjects. And, looking down on them, she asked her mother in a wondering voice: "Mamma, do all these people belong to me?" There is a world of wisdom in Emma's correction: "No, my child, it is you who belong to all these people."

That became the guiding principle of her education to queenship. Though The Hague is the Royal Residence and the Seat of the Government, Wilhelmina spent her youth at the Palace Het Loo. It is a low and wide two-storeyed country seat, a short distance from the townlet of Apeldoorn, in the heart of the Veluwe, Gelderland's vast stretch of woods and moorland, perhaps the only part of the country not under intensive cultivation. Throughout the centuries it had been the hunting-box of the Princes of Orange, since William and Mary bought it from the Bentincks. Le Notre, the magician of Versailles, had laid out the gardens, and every succeeding Stadholder or King had enlarged and improved the estate, so that gradually Het Loo became the favourite residence, a Dutch Windsor and Sandringham and Balmoral rolled into one; essentially peaceful, only Napoleon had found it too quiet. The hamlet has only one street, appropriately called King Street, a few modest villas and some small houses for those connected with the palace.

In the hall hangs a painting of Holland's last King, sitting in the living room of a farmstead at the nearby Uddeler Lake, cuddling a bonny peasant child on his knee. Somehow this picture characterises the atmosphere of the palace, and not

the elaborate wedding presents of foreign royalties, which are everywhere in evidence.

Wilhelmina's father, fond as he was of the previous saviour of his dynasty, had built in the adjoining wood a Child's Chalet for his little daughter. For her earliest hobby was the true domestic Dutch art of cooking, with such a thoroughness that she preferred to grow her own vegetables. Famous professors taught her languages, history and constitutional law; grey Admirals and Generals the rudiments of naval and military science. Often the young child of an old parent is exceptionally gifted. Such was certainly her case, for her educational programme seems to modern pedagogical eyes staggeringly overloaded. But she carried the feat off lightly, and yet had time and pleasure to bake her own cookies and experiment with puddings.

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When Wilhelmina reached, on her eighteenth birthday, the age of constitutional majority, she was officially inaugurated as Queen. She walked from her palace in Amsterdam to the nearby New Church, attired already in her cloak of ermine and velvet, the Sword of State and the Standard of the Realm carried before her.

In the church the Crown, the Sceptre and the Orb were laid before her, and around her gathered her faithful *Staten Generaal*: Senate and House of Commons, the elected representatives of her people, who, each called up by name, swore allegiance to her. As she sat there between the grey and the bearded, between high officers and native princes, the scene was more like a noble dream than a fairy tale come true. When the sacred moment of her own oath came, she rose, a radiant young girl, firmly holding up her small white hand to swear, in a crystal clear unshaken voice, allegiance to the constitutional liberties of her people. Tears of emotion trickled down the face of the venerable President of the Senate who had to administer the oath.

Afterwards, on her drive through Amsterdam, she found all her people assembled from near and far to wish her God Speed, clustering on the stands in masses which for these times were unheard of, ships in the canals, every window and every roof along her triumphal drive. The just crowned Queen of the Netherlands rose in her carriage and stretched both her arms towards her people in the unrestrained spontaneity of youth. As she testified in that first proclamation of her own: "From my earliest youth you have surrounded me with your love" . . .

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Marriage was obviously an urgent necessity of state. For on her alone depended the continuation of a centuries old dynasty. The choice was restricted to a Protestant prince, but anyone who stood a chance of inheriting a foreign throne was barred by the Dutch constitution, anxious to avoid personal international entanglements.

Henry, Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, admirably filled the requirements. They had made each other's acquaintance at Cannes and they married a year later, when the Queen was still under twenty-one. The Duke became a Dutch citizen, with the title of Prince of the Netherlands.

A charming anecdote throws a light on the unenviable position of this Consort. The very morning—eight years later—on which his daughter was born, the Prince happened to meet one of the cabinet ministers, who, naturally, warmly congratulated him. "A pity", the Prince remarked, "that it is a girl." "But your Royal Highness", remonstrated the minister, "I can assure you that after the nation's wonderful experience with the Dowager Queen Emma and with Queen Wilhelmina there is nobody in Holland who is not as delighted with a girl as with a boy." "Ah, I was not doubting that", interrupted the Prince, "I was thinking of the poor blighter who one day shall have to be Prince Consort again...."

England remembers from Victoria's reign the far from easy position of a Prince Consort. Henry was simple, jovial and obliging, three characteristics which won him the affection of his new countrymen. Little interested in statecraft, he limited his activities carefully. Agriculture interested him, anything to do with the soil, horses and cattle. And he made not merely a decorative but a really energetic president of the Dutch Red Cross Society, and of many other philanthropic institutions.

A year after her marriage the Queen contracted typhus, and for some weeks the shadow of death hovered over Het Loo. She recovered, but high hopes went in the aftermath. Eight years of anxiety followed: the Queen was last of her line without a heir! Once more she narrowly escaped death when the royal carriage stuck in the tramrails. But for the presence of mind of the tram conductor who braked in the nick of time, and of the Prince who prevented the horses of the badly damaged landau from bolting, the Queen might have been killed. The throne would have then gone to some obscure German princeling, completely alien to Holland and totally unknown there, but somehow issue of a branch of the Nassaus. Hence the international

interest centred round the succession. Hence the change in the constitution which the government carried through during the Great War, whereby all those distant claimants to the heritage of the Dutch throne were cut off altogether, and a new provision inserted whereby, in the case of the King or Queen dying without issue, the States General must elect a new King within three months.

However, one fateful evening at the very end of April 1909, the national and foreign press correspondents were invited to remain overnight at the Royal Palace. At three a.m. a hot supper was served, and at the break of dawn a Court official suddenly appeared. Hardly had he begun to read the age-old formula when he stopped abruptly: "Gentlemen, it is a princess!" . . . And correspondents of *Daily Mail*, *Paris Soir*, *Washington Post*, all bolted out and raced to the nearby G.P.O.—a good sprint, in which Sir Philip Gibbs appeared to be leading—to wire to all the capitals of the world the glad tidings which fifty-one gun salvos majestically boomed out over joyously expectant Holland.

After a happy youth Princess Juliana, now twenty-nine, has blossomed out into a radiant wife and mother, who takes her duties as member of the Council of State as seriously as those of attending to her little baby daughter, Princess Beatrix: "she who brought happiness."

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Internationally The Hague, the world's largest and dandiest village, as it has been affectionately called by its many foreign admirers, has always been a favorite with diplomats. Hugo Grotius and Asser are but two Dutch names of men who have made International Law what it is to-day. It was at The Hague, between the Rubenesque goddesses and nymphs of the great hall of the House in the Wood, that the bald, grey-bearded diplomats came together for the first Peace Conference of 1899, and for its successor of 1907. It was here that the Peace Palace, gift of the Scottish born American millionaire Andrew Carnegie, was opened—a year before the outbreak of the World War. But after that holocaust at least one phoenix rose from the ashes of shattered international collaboration, the Permanent Court of International Justice, which the Peace Palace now houses. Here international judges summon no mere individuals, but nations. Even the United States gave it such famous scions as the late Elihu Root and Frank B. Kellogg and Mr. Hughes, their present Chief Justice.

Internationally, Holland's worries during the first part of Queen Wilhelmina's reign had been minor problems. The proximity of the island of Curaçao, in the Dutch East Indies, to Venezuela often provoked friction with that very unstable state. Holland had to take part in international actions in Turkey and China, to safeguard her extensive trade interests. Lately she had to side with England and the United States in their firm attitude to Mexico, annexing oil properties. A seemingly recurrent trouble!

Thus when the Great War broke loose, it was an honest neutrality which Holland could proclaim to the world—based not on monetary calculations, but on true national tradition and sentiment. At the start of the Queen's reign certain zealots had tried to charm Holland for a Customs Union with the German Reich, and when that effort came to naught, had proposed at least a Postal Union. The nation refused to consider either of these ideas, as it remained likewise distant from the attempts of others to enter into an economic and military treaty with Belgium. Closely knit as Belgium then was to her French neighbour, it would have been sheer folly, as after-events soon showed.

When the War broke out, this policy of neutrality rewarded the nation. There can be no doubt that the rape of Belgium shocked Holland profoundly. Literally tens of thousands of the very poorest Belgians were given food, clothing and shelter for four long years. The Queen took a personal interest in the exchange of prisoners. At a railway accident, in 1917, when her coach was amongst the few left intact, she went along the débris and, comforting the wounded, gave them to drink, English and Germans alike. Charles Morgan, the present dramatic critic of *The Times*, pays in his famous novel *The Fountain* a warm tribute to all that the Dutch did during these years. English troops, interned in a camp at Groningen, formed a cabaret, appropriately styled the "Timbertown Follies", which made the English more popular in Holland than any statesmanship in London could have achieved.

There is no doubt that the majority of the Dutch at the beginning of the War was pronouncedly anti-German. But as the war went on, when Greece became almost as bad an example against the Allies as Belgium was against the Central Powers, and particularly when a multitude of British Orders in Council threw a net around neutral shipping, many were inclined to believe that there was not much choice between the

devil and the deep sea. When almost the whole Dutch fisherfleet was forcibly retained in British harbours, so as to make the blockade of Germany more effective by preventing any chance of food "leaking" through Holland, when, pressed for tonnage, Great Britain and America confiscated almost the entire Dutch mercantile marine, little of the original sentiment in favour of the Allies remained left. "Though", as the British Minister at The Hague in those days, Sir Walter Townley, later openly admitted, "Holland's neutrality was a fact, it was an absolutely impartial neutrality, and no mere face saving."

Undoubtedly the war years were a nightmare for Holland. The privations in lack of food and fuel were hardest to bear. Economic life was paralyzed; Holland, the "Carter Paterson" of the oceans, had nothing to transport. Half a million men stood guard at the frontiers—the whole army remaining mobilized for four long years, to ward off any intruder. To make matters worse, four provinces, almost a third of the national territory, were flooded in 1916, when one of the sea dykes gave way to a unprecedented gale.

The end of the war came dramatically with the flight of the Kaiser and Crown Prince into Holland, after the collapse of the German Imperial Headquarters at Spa. Holland had not solicited these exalted fugitives; but once they had put themselves under her age-old hospitality, the country was prepared to stand by that traditional right. The Allies demanded their surrender, Holland proudly refused and—as many a British statesman has since admitted—thereby saved them from what would have been the greatest blunder in history.

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When the Armistice came, its relief went to some people's heads. In nearby Germany the monarchies tottered, socialist leaders rose to highest power. For a moment it looked as if even Holland had lost her traditional equilibrium; the Dutch socialist leader Troelstra announced the Revolution, but announced it with true Dutch thoroughness, a week in advance! The loyalists had time to rise, led by the staunchly Catholic provinces of the South. The day earmarked for the inauguration of the Republic became the greatest demonstration of loyalty which the monarchy ever witnessed.

I can still see the hundreds of thousands who with their flags and banners had moved into The Hague, from the furthest corners of the land. The troops insisted on drawing the Queen's landau through the parade grounds. She had her arms folded

round Juliana, deeply moved. With a tremulous voice she asked the troops who pulled her carriage to go slowly: "I'd like to see who pays me this tribute". But a voice boomed out through the bare trees "All Holland, Your Majesty", a motion carried by tumultuous cherring. The enormous crowd surged round the carriage with its Queen—*Landsmoeder*, Mother of the Land, as she has been called since that day. After she had been triumphantly carried home—to that modest palace which stands in the middle of a busy shopping street—she appeared on the balcony with her ministers. That evening she issued a proclamation announcing that "Social reforms shall be carried through with a speed fitting to the pulsation of our time". A farsighted *bourgeoisie* consented indeed to timely concessions. Holland remained the country in which the standard of living is highest, in which particularly the working man and the lower classes can live well. When years later Philip Snowden, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, visited The Hague, his genuine astonishment was flattering to behold.

How the rally of the nation round the Queen stood it in good stead was soon proved when from the Versailles Peace Conference sensational rumours raised their ugly head, all too soon to become confirmed. Belgium, intoxicated by victory, wanted to enlarge itself at the cost of Holland: the southern parts of the Dutch provinces of Zeeland and Limburg, handed over to Belgium, would make the Dutch Belgian frontier a much straighter line; so they argued naively! The French were only too willing to oblige, the Italians indifferent, Lloyd George weak—and the danger of satisfying spoilt Belgium at the expense of a country which had stayed neutral, and therewith was already somewhat suspect in the eyes of the victors, was real.

Two happenings stayed the danger. The Queen's visit to her debated territories resulted in such tremendous demonstrations of national consciousness that their echo could not be ignored even abroad. And at Versailles the Boer statesmen, Botha and Smuts, put a firm foot down with the British Delegation. To those Afrikanders, members of the Imperial War Cabinet, Holland was their spiritual fatherland, Dutch their mother tongue. In the darkest hour of the Boer war, when not one of the great powers, in fear of England, had dared to offer the slightest help, Wilhelmina had sent a warship, thus securing President Kruger a safe shelter in Holland. Now came South Africa's chance: the British decision, that a ceding of Dutch territory could not even be discussed, meant the end of a nightmare.

For many years afterwards this dark attempt poisoned Dutch-Belgian relations. Holland had been foster mother to multitudes of Belgian fugitives and war orphans, during four long years in which she often had to tighten her own belt. This gross ungratefulness was very bitterly felt. But time heals all wounds. Crown Prince Leopold of Belgium, visiting the Dutch East Indies twice on extensive study tours, rapidly became popular. His ascent to the throne involved new possibilities. And when a few months ago, at the baptism of the Baby Princess Beatrix, Queen Wilhelmina invited King Leopold to be godfather to her first grandchild, their meeting showed a deep reciprocal affection. His state visit to Holland, next November, will give the two nations a chance of inaugurating a new and happier era of Dutch-Belgian collaboration.

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In 1934 the Queen's mother succumbed. Queen Emma, who had come to Holland in her youth like the beauty of a fairy tale, had silvered into the exquisite beauty of her old age, "the loveliest old lady of Europe." To quote her daughter's words to the nation after the funeral: "She was a mother to all of us, and your last good-bye has been the most wonderful crown on her life."

A few months later the Prince Consort died, so suddenly that a slight indisposition was considered too negligible by the doctors to warn Princess Juliana who was staying at the time in Kensington Palace with the Athlones. On a July morning before dawn, a lonely lady paced the quayside at Hook of Holland, and when the L.N.E.R. mailboat from Harwich docked, mother and daughter met each other on the landing bridge in a silent embrace.

Again the Queen spoke to her people: "We are moved and grateful that his good heart and friendliness, his simple nature has made him so many friends," she begins, commemorating her dead consort; then, recalling the recent death of her mother, "we look upwards to the Light, to the Peace which is their part"; finally, movingly and abruptly, "I thank God for the love of my people. . . ."

Her dear ones sleep their last sleep at Delft, in the New Church, restored by national thankoffering at her Silver Jubilee. Here in the Dutchest of Dutch towns William the Silent was murdered. His last breath, when he was stabbed in the heart by a hireling, was prayer for his people. History since stood reverently

still at Delft, its placid canals reflecting in the old gabled houses the spirit of bygone ages. And from the vast market place, with its low houses, rises the imposingly tall spire of the Mausoleum of her Dynasty.

The Queen is Dutch Reformed by religion, but more of an ethical shade than in narrow orthodoxy. At home she proceeds every morning to prayer and Bible lecture, though attendance is not compulsory for suite or servants, among whom there are many Catholics. With the strong Catholic minority of her subjects she has always been on good terms. The late Monsignor Nolens, leader of the Catholic Party, was for years her trusted adviser, on whom she had urged more than once the offer of the Premiership.

Her faith is a living one. She went specially to Paris to inaugurate the monument to one of her ancestors, the Admiral de Coligny, leader of the Huguenots. But she knew how to turn the nature of her homage into an equally great moral support for the Catholics of France suffering under a heyday of militant atheism. When a replica of the famous statue of Christ, which on the frontier ridges of the Andes commemorates peace between Chile and the Argentine, was placed on the grand staircase of The Hague Peace Palace, Wilhelmina coined her historic *Credo*: "Christ before Everything." And how her faith is no mere tradition, but a burning flame within her, shows her Christmas address in 1915—under the imminent danger of war—with these thoughts to her people: "The little Jesus Child has always asked much faith. It still does so. Ours the proud courage to give it. Let us go therefore with the shepherds to the cradle with all our needs and with all our problems..."

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When, still a young woman of barely twenty-one, the Queen made her momentous decision to send a Dutch man-of-war for President Kruger, Europe called her "the last man on a throne of Europe." Somehow this sums up another aspect of the Queen's character. She feels strongly a tradition of centuries embodied in her. She likes by temperament to be on the bridge, even if the weather is rough. Hers is a resoluteness which wants to see orders obeyed, wishes reckoned with. When a Defence Minister in the middle of the Great War wanted to force a political situation by tendering his resignation, the Queen refused even to see him. And when, about the same time, the Cabinet playing for safety refused the plans of the Minister of Marine to have Dutch merchant vessels convoyed

by war ships, she bestowed the highest rank at her Court on the courageous sailor.

Very simple in her tastes, she hates popularity; in fact no other monarch ever went so far in deliberately shunning it. Her greatest charm is her melodious, warm-timbered voice. She is certainly not a leader of fashion, she does not attempt to be. But that she has great taste was proved at the exhibition of her paintings, which she allowed to help artists suffering from the slump, some years ago. They showed a command of colour and of line which was truly astonishing.

She has a strong feminine reticence. Her serious face keeps people at a distance, but this is more inherent shyness than deliberate coolness. Her almost manly resoluteness has become proverbial. She did not mind treading through the mud when, at the French army manoeuvres, she desired to inspect a gun at close range: "I do the same at home." And indeed she does! Immediately after the reception of the diplomatic corps on New Year's Day 1926 the Queen, notwithstanding the bitter cold, took the evening train to the inundated regions. Where the rowing boats could not carry her further, the next morning she went ahead, carried on the shoulders of sturdy sailors.

Her personal character corresponds ideally with the Dutch national character. With her great sense of responsibility, coupled to her extraordinary intelligence, one can hardly minimise the value of her constant supervision, as the head of state, over all actions of the government of the day. She has turned the Crown into the keeper of the government's conscience, safeguarding true democracy against mere party bossing. During these forty years of her reign she has worked with just over a dozen cabinets, of various shades and opinions. She never had to make use of her right of veto; only twice she dissolved parliament. When she came to the throne there were barely half a million voters on the register; gradual extensions of franchise have sent this number up to over four million now. But though the Dutchman is by nature an individualist—Proportional Representation has resulted in a good dozen parties, and tyrannic state power would be unthinkable in Holland—there has always been more that unites than divides. This higher unity, consecrated as it is by a tradition of four centuries, has found in the Throne more than a mere symbol.

There is little pomp and show in Dutch Court life. The visits of foreign potentates have been few and far between. Most of her own extensive travels have been *incognito*, under her

favorite title of Countess van Buren:—the Norwegian fjords, Switzerland, Tyrol and the Vosges, the Lake District and the Scottish Highlands, where she once prolonged her holiday over her birthday and took suite and servants on a char-a-banc picnic to the Trossacks.

Only when exercising her royal prerogative of opening parliament, the third Tuesday of September, does she clothe herself with royal splendour. In her Golden Coach she drives to the Hall of the Knights, up the courtyard where Holland's very heart beats through the ages. Under the high wooden roof, the late summer sun setting the orders of the men and the jewels of the ladies ablaze, the Queen, in the midst of her faithful *Staten Generaal* reads her speech from the Throne, the programme of yet another year of parliamentary legislation.

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Holland has grown in the forty years of her reign by leaps and bounds, from the five millions at her accession to the more than eight and a half millions of to-day. The country changed from one formerly almost entirely agricultural to one now largely industrial. When King George V, having recovered from his serious illness, desired to address his whole Empire, in 1929, his world audience was linked up through Eindhoven. Through the gigantic Zuiderzee Reclamation, Holland is peacefully adding a twelfth province to her territory. Wieringen, which at the end of the war was still such a desolate island that it could serve as a safe internment for the ex-Crown Prince of Germany, is now a hill in a polder which has already brought forth some good harvests. At Ymuiden the greatest sluice gates of the world were built, the Dutch merchant fleet remains one of the finest on the Seven Seas, and Dutch tugboats brought the enormous floating dry dock safe from its British wharf to far eastern Singapore. After having flown a regular weekly postal service from Amsterdam to Batavia for years, far ahead of any of the big fellows, the Dutch achievement in the Melbourne Air Contest was really the outstanding performance of the race. Science and the Arts flourish, and in architecture a school is springing up, bidding fair to rival the fame of the great Dutch schools of painting.

Braving the world crisis and the slump, and the recent economic setback, the Dutch continue to renew their state in a stronger sense of social justice and equality. They kept their independence unimpaired, their foreign policy respected, maintain as they are of the Oslo group of nations. Order and peace

reigns throughout the country, the laws are obeyed in freedom, political parties collaborate in a smooth working parliamentary machinery, elections take place without riots or murder, neither communism nor fascism could keep a hold on this people. The civil service is efficient and honest. In short, life is still good and conditions are still normal; the country can even afford to look properly after that fifth of its labouring population which is unemployed!

Holland's external position has always been far greater than that of a small state. Not only because of its strategic importance in this exposed corner of N. W. Europe, delta of the great European rivers, but particularly because of its vast colonial empire.

Once upon a time, it is not a fairy tale but a historical fact, the orange, white and blue flew from the Indies and Cape Town, Ceylon and Brazil. New Zealand and Tasmania testify in their very names that the Dutch were there first, as was the case with New Amsterdam, now New York, and New Holland, now Australia. No small nation could expect to keep the world thus in liege. But to quote another maxim of the House of Orange: "It is not the result which counts, it's the glorious effort!" An effort which, surely, has never been equalled. Holland has stuck tenaciously to the Dutch East Indies, in surface the size of Europe, with a population of over sixty millions: the fabulous spice islands of the old voyagers, which wind themselves around the Equator like a girdle of smaragd. The Dutch rule it with tolerance and foresight, they gave it a great measure of self-determination, greater than the natives could hope of any other power, and the Dutch colonial system is, on evidence as fresh as Lord Harlech's, second to none. As is proved by their prosperity and unruffled tranquillity amidst the seething tumult of the East to-day!

When the young Queen mounted her throne, the last expeditionary force of great importance, that for the subjection of the Sultanate of Atchin, was about to start on its final campaign. The soldiers were admonished "to be the protectors of all good intentions, of the property of the whole populace, so that after the war is over, the people will submit without hate and with faith." Even in the Tropics Holland lived up to that royal admonition: to be truly great in everything in which a small nation can be great.

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A thousand years ago, the period over which government can be traced in the Low Countries, Holland was but marshland and

forests, the sea reigning supreme, wolves and bears abounding. Not a single year has passed without this sea having been intrepidly pushed back. There is a popular saying that whereas God created the world, the Dutch made Holland themselves. Authority and order, based on strong individual liberties, are its secret.

To-day the Monarchy remains ideal, grown as it is—organically, like everything Dutch—from elected Stadholders to constitutional Kings, sprung from the people, supported by it, tied to it by countless bonds. Far from a mere ornament, it is like the cornerstone in the top of a Gothic arch, an ornament which at the same time holds the whole well balanced construction together.

There is something in those grey horizons, in those flat polders—flatter even than pancakes, for they lie so sunk below the level of the sea that the barges in the canals seem to ride the landscape—which tends to flatten Dutch national character. But the Queen, who works and struggles with her people, is the dictator of their hearts and—so they feel—ininitely greater and nobler than those over advertised self-imposed dictators elsewhere.

When fifteen years ago her Silver Jubilee was celebrated, it took her people from early in the afternoon until nine at night to pass the balcony of her palace, on which she remained all those hours, almost exhausted by this demonstration of affection. The happenings since in other countries, where whole nations have been denuded of their most elementary liberties, have rallied all Dutch forces even more staunchly round her throne, guarantor of a priceless inheritance.

Only two of her ancestors have just reached the two score years of reign: Prince Maurice in the seventeenth century, and her own father. But at her fortieth anniversary nobody need think of an approaching end. Ripened by wide experience, enobled by griefs and joys, with a new generation growing up by her side, she is to-day, fifty-eight years old, in full mental and physical vigour, better loved and respected than she has ever been: the nation's safe anchorage in the storms of our times.

Therefore the Singing Towers of Holland toll deeply and jubilantly over the silver rivers, the luscious meadows and the busy ancient cities of her realm. For in commemorating Forty Years of Queen Wilhelmina's reign, Holland celebrates a historic Era of Prosperity, Happiness and Peace.