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Sir Henry Wotton, Jacobean Diplomat: The Early Career to 1612

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**SIR HENRY WOTTON
JACOBAN DIPLOMAT
THE EARLY CAREER TO 1612**

by
JAMES JOSEPH O'NEIL

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF LOYOLA UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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VITA

The author, James Joseph O'Neil, was born in New York City on June 28, 1942, the son of Raymond A. and Evelyn O'Neil. Raised in Manhattan and a student at parochial schools there, he graduated from Warwick High School in upstate New York.

In 1964, O'Neil graduated from Iona College in New Rochelle, Westchester County, New York with a B.A. in history and political science. In the following years, O'Neil worked in Washington, D.C. at the Library of Congress and carried out research for Congressman Charles W. Whalen, Jr. of Ohio. He entered the University of Dayton in September 1971 as a graduate student in history. While there, he worked as a teaching assistant for three semesters and served as president of the Delta Eta Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the national honor society in history. In addition, he received the university scholarship award before graduating in July 1973.

The following September, O'Neil entered Loyola University of Chicago to study for the doctorate in history. He was both a teaching assistant and lecturer in history over a span of five semesters and served a term as president of the Loyola History Graduate Students Association.

At present, he is an Instructor in history at the University of Dayton and resides in Kettering, Ohio.

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INTRODUCTION

When writing of a man who died over three and a half centuries ago, one must consider the question of how that individual, not ranking among the greats of history, can be of any real interest today. The world in which he played his role is gone, the issues with which he concerned himself long settled and forgotten. Sir Henry Wotton, diplomat, art connoisseur and poet is such a man.

If style and spirit are valid criteria for remembrance, then certainly this Elizabethan is worthy to be preserved from obscurity if only as a witness to the deadening hand of modern uniformity. Wotton was an integral part of an establishment and without a doubt, he conformed to it, at times much more than was warranted. But at the same time he was an intellectual of some power with a whimsical way about him, a wearer of different "hats," an actor of consummate skill. Unfortunately, a hagiographical version of his life has been handed down, turning his story into a period piece more of interest to the antiquarian than the historian. But there are some glowing coals among the ashes of religious topics. An ardent patriot and "true-born Englishman," Wotton was one of the most cosmopolitan Britons of his age. Already a well-educated adult at the time of the Armada, he lived up to the very eve of the Age of Cromwell, one of the few well-placed

historical figures to do so. On this count alone he is worthy of consideration.

In the past, Wotton was portrayed as a highly motivated missionary, a notable if not overwhelming force in advocating Protestantism in his time. Advanced first by Izaak Walton who knew the retired diplomat as Provost of Eton and then by the American expatriate, Logan Pearsall Smith, this version was official for anyone who took notice. It is ironic that Smith, born into a well-known Quaker family but later a freethinker, should emphasize to the point of distortion Wotton's desire to spread his faith. Smith did note that Wotton was "non-doctrinal," reasonably evangelical in his religious expression, but then went on to treat him as an ardent disciple of reformed divines, determined to bring the light to benighted Italy.

Wotton was an emotional man, of mountainous peaks and sloughs of despond which brought him physical illness as well as world weariness. It is no surprise that he did try to find occasions to combat "superstition" and Romanism by smuggling Protestant apologetical works into Venice and sponsoring sermons at his embassy residence but it is certain that before the end of his first term as King James' envoy, he understood the futility of this approach in a Catholic state. One indication of this is the almost total lack of religious emphasis during his second and third tours of duty in Venice.

What Sir Henry would have attempted had he been his own sovereign is interesting to speculate on but it is not pertinent here. This native of Kent was a servant of James I, a master who certainly was no model of consistency but who nevertheless had a clear understanding of his prerogative and expected his ambassadors to project that image abroad. On this count, he did not have to press such a royalist as Wotton who often acted foolishly in behalf of the the "wisest fool in Chistendom" as James was aptly described. Just as appearances have deceived many historians in evaluating the first Stuart monarch, his ambassador's prose has led some astray. Royal servant was the title Wotton gloried in and as the unifying factor in his career, provides the basis of this dissertation.

Since Wotton's first tour of duty coincided with a major increase of English economic life in the Mediterranean, I have attempted to provide an adequate description of the economic setting in which the ambassador had to carry out his duties. This aspect was virtually ignored by previous commentators and it is very fortunate that so much recent research on the economic life of northern Italy is now available. We can see more clearly now how the upward look of British enterprise in the Mediterranean would be a source of pride and reassurance to the new ambassador even though he was in no way commercially oriented. The Crown's presence was indeed enhanced by ships flying the cross of St. George.

CHAPTER I

Still in existence today and situated almost exactly in the middle of the county of Kent stands Boughton or Bocton Hall in the parish of Bocton Malherbe. In this modest ancestral home, Henry Wotton was born on March 30, 1568 into a stable, prosperous, and for his century, a comfortable existence. Wotton's growing-up years, the twenty before the Armada, were the best two successive decades since Henry VII managed to keep England reasonably solvent and out of war. Kent was a model political unit, whose geographical position placed it between the Continent and London, that is, in the path of everything good or ill to come across the water. What it also provided was a governing class unusually concerned with things foreign whether it was a new influx of Protestant refugee tradesmen or the threat of Spanish invasion from the Low Countries. Without a doubt, Wotton was brought up in an atmosphere where instilling consternation in papist hearts was an ever-present pastime.¹

Elizabethan Kent was firmly and warmly held in the Crown's

¹Edward Hasted, The History and Typographical Survey of the County of Kent, 12 vols. (London, 1797-1801; reprint ed., Maidstone: The Kent County Library, 1972), 5: 397; Logan Pearsall Smith, The Life and Letters of Sir Henry Wotton, 2 vols. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1907), 1, 3; See the various plates in Thomas Wotton, The Letter Book of Thomas Wotton 1574-86, ed. G. Eland (Oxford: The University Press, 1960).

embrace despite its vaunted reputation for independent thinking and rebellion. Fortunately for Elizabeth I, the county was strong enough in the Protestant faith to aid the Sovereign's "Settlement" and less a home to those elements that yearned for a polity either Genevan or pre-Henrician in tone. While it was still overwhelmingly rural and agricultural, in comparison with the semi-feudal almost barbaric north, Kent was a "civilized" country, a pleasant diversified land, surrounded on three sides by water, and in close proximity to the booming markets of the capital city. Just as it would be impossible to write about Kent without considering the Narrow Seas and the powers across the water, it would likewise be out of place to forget that London lay less than a day's journey from most points in the county.

How did Wotton's family fit into this community? Since the early fifteenth century, the governors of the county had included several of the clan. Sir Edward (1489-1551), was Treasurer of Calais and one of the executors of Henry VIII's will. His brother, Nicholas (1497-1567), was a brilliant career diplomat, a priest who could accomodate himself to all the religious changes from the break with Rome to Elizabeth's reintroduction of Protestantism. It was said that he turned down the Primatial See of Canterbury in his old age. Whether this was in response to the traditional Wotton antipathy to higher office or to a higher loyalty to Rome, which he

regained under Queen Mary, is impossible to say. His nephew, Thomas (1521-1587), Henry's father, can be characterized as an humble, home-loving man who like his uncle, made a career of turning down major offices or opportunities that would attach him to the Court. Thomas had been in enough favor under Edward VI to be nominated a Knight of the Bath but the boy-king died before the installation. The young squire was left off the subsequent list under Mary, for his devout Protestantism was well known. In September, 1553, the Privy Council sent "a letter to Thomas Wotton esquire, discharging him from being Knight of the Bath, whereunto he was once appointed and written unto..."²

He had recently become master of his estates on the death of his father and was settling down to his role as a responsible subject when Wyatt's Rebellion was gathering momentum to topple Mary from her throne (January, 1554). Sir Thomas Wyatt of Allington Castle near Maidstone and many of his fellow gentry were friends of the Wottons and it would have been a major coup of this old landed family had gone over to the revolt. Thomas himself was under house arrest just before the outbreak and his son, Sir Henry, in his later years, had an interesting story to tell Izaak Walton

²Quoted in the Dictionary of National Biography, 23: 960. The same source has been used extensively for general background on the Wotton Family. Henceforth DNB.

concerning his father. Whether true or not, it is a good illustration of a mentality very different from the modern. Walton says that Uncle Nicholas, while on an embassy to France "dreamed that his nephew...was inclined to be a party in such a project, as if he were not prevented, would turn both to the loss of his life and ruin of his family."³ The same dream occurred the next night and so he decided to ask the queen to bring his nephew before the Lords of her Council so that they "might give a colour for his commitment into a favourable prison."⁴

Walton is the only source for the dream sequence and without it we would be left with the skeleton account from the Privy Council proceedings for 1553: "This day Thomas Wotton esquire, for obstinate standing against matters of religion, was committed to the Fleet to remain a close prisoner."⁵ Although the date is unknown, Thomas was released before the end of the reign with the help of Francis Walsingham, one of the masters of intelligence gathering in his time, and later, Elizabeth's Principal Secretary. Four of the letters from the squire's Letterbook were addressed to Walsingham and plainly

³Izaak Walton, The life of Sir Henry Wotton (London, 1670; facsimile ed., Menston, England: The Scholar Press, 1969), 14.

⁴Ibid., 15.

⁵Quoted in DNB, "Thomas Wotton."

show that they were close friends. Writing twenty years into Elizabeth's reign, he thanked Sir Francis "for the delivery of my son John Wotton...Thus have you first delivered me (without good cause...once shut up in prison) and now for my sake, my son."⁶ Why the young John Wotton, later to be knighted by Essex at Rouen in 1591, was behind bars is unknown, but his father's close brush with the arbitrary will of his sovereign reinforced his natural bent to look after his own affairs as a country gentleman. Walton informs us that he had many invitations from Elizabeth to assume responsible positions which would have invariably included a knighthood. His epitaph commemorates him as a knight, so it is probable that he afterwards took on the burden of that honor.⁷

Like his father, Edward, Thomas was appointed Sheriff of Kent, and this only six days after Elizabeth's accession. He served again, in the same position, exactly two decades later and held the office of Custos Rotulorum from 1562 to 1587. In addition, he served on many commissions, often thankless and without compensation.⁸ Like all the Tudors, Elizabeth had

⁶Ibid., 16.

⁷Hasted, Kent, 5: 402.

⁸The Custos Rotulorum was an officer charged with keeping the records of the courts in a county. After 1545, the office was bestowed by the Crown. For a good treatment of Thomas' career and the Kentish political scene, see Peter Clark, English Provincial Society (Lewes, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1977), 131 ff.

need of the faithful Wottons. In the summer of 1573, she made a long progress through Kent including a stay at Boughton where it was rumored that Thomas was offered the Lord Deputyship of Ireland as well as a knighthood. About a year later, he wrote to his friend, Owen Moore: "That wind that out of England blew into Ireland a report of my coming thither...I am not (I thank God) so ambitious as that for a little honour that I should take upon me an office of greater weight than my shoulders are able to bear..."⁹

In a man less genuine, this line would be the most ridiculous false modesty. The second part of the letter is not just an apology but a sincere statement that should be quoted in full:

...And therefore far from the Court and matters of state, brought up (as you know) in the Country about country causes (and of all others best known to myself), I have for mine excuse and discharge alleged that (constrained by the duty of a good subject) I was (me thought) bound to say plainly and effectually. And so here am I, and while God shall suffer me to live, (I hope) here shall you find me, in a mean estate contented with that that the Lord hath sent me, being many ways much more than I have deserved, and every way as much as I desire.¹⁰

Here it should be mentioned that his son Henry's poem, The Character of Happy Life, is extremely reminiscent of the attitude expressed in this letter as is shown in one stanza:

⁹Thomas Wotton, Letter Book, 2-3.

¹⁰Ibid., 4.

This man is freed from servile hands
 Of hope to rise or fear to fall;
 Lord of himself, though not of lands,
 And, having nothing, yet hath all.¹¹

The apple did not fall far from the tree.

Very little is known about the young Wotton before his first trip to the Continent. He was the only surviving son of his father's second marriage to a widow, Eleanor Morton. As was quite common in that environment, she was a cousin of the Wottons, the daughter of Sir William Finch of Eastwell, Kent. It was from his pious mother and private tutor that he received his early education. Walton, from whom we get almost all that is known of the diplomat's early life, mentions that he was sent to Winchester School at an early age, and then at sixteen, left for Oxford. He matriculated to New College on June 5, 1584, but transferred to Hart Hall and then to Queen's, from which he obtained his degree--probably the B.A.--in June, 1588.¹²

Both universities during this period were closely linked, by way of the rising young gentlemen, with the world outside. Many of these sons of the gentry came with insatiable intellectual appetites, far greater than the formal curriculum

¹¹John Hannah, ed., Poems by Sir Henry Wotton, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Others (London, 1845), 30.

¹²Walton says that Wotton graduated M.A. but Smith finds no evidence of any degree being granted. It is likely that Walton was "half-right" and that Wotton received a B.A.

could cope with. They sought to round themselves into humane estate managers rather than degreed scholars, to be "active rather than contemplative philosophers."¹³ To this end, extra-statutory instruction in history, both classical and modern, geography, practical divinity and modern languages was pursued. With few exceptions, Italian today is a language restricted to its homeland; in the sixteenth century, it was the cultured speech of the courtier and gentlemen. During Wotton's student days, the tongue could be learned at both universities and it was a common sight to see Oxford scholars reading works by Castiglione or Guicciardini.

Numerous Italians came to Elizabethan England as Protestant refugees, many of them becoming naturalized subjects.¹⁴ Some managed to bring their wealth with them or were able to maintain connections with the banking houses in Italy. Sir Horatio Palavicino was of this class. Others like the grammarians Battista Castiglione and John Florio earned their bread through writing and tutoring and even did a little spying for Walsingham. Giacomo Castelvetro, at first, did undercover work in England, then moved to Scotland and became a language tutor to James VI and his wife, Anne of

¹³Mark H. Curtis, Oxford and Cambridge in Transition 1558-1642 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), 126 ff.

¹⁴See Alan Haynes, "Italian Immigrants in England 1550-1603," History Today 27 (1977): 526-534.

Denmark. He later returned to his native Venice to teach English officials and visitors Italian. Aside from entrepreneurs and physicians, most of the refugees sought patrons and it was one of these empty-pursed scholars, the great civilian, Alberico Gentili, who had a decided influence on the young Wotton.

Of a family well-known in medical and legal circles, Alberico was born in 1552 in San Genesio in the Papal States. Some years after receiving his LL.D at Perugia, he, his father Dr. Matteo, and his brother Scipio, were forced to flee the Inquisition, first settling in Laibach, Carniola, in the Habsburg dominions, and then after the tolerant atmosphere evaporated, in other parts; Alberico and his father to London and Scipio to Tubingen to complete his studies. As Protestant refugees, they were most welcome in England; as a scholar, Alberico was a most valued addition to the university.¹⁵ At first, he concentrated almost exclusively on the Civil Law, publishing De Juris Interpretibus, Dialogi Sex, in August, 1582. Dedicated to his principal patron, the Earl of Leicester, Alberico endeavored to defend the old Italian masters, the Bartolists, against the humanists and their leader, Cujas.

¹⁵On Gentili's life and career, see DNB, 7, 1003-06; Thomas Erskine Holland, Inaugural Lecture on Albericus Gentilis (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1874); Gesina Van der Molen, Alberico Gentili and the Development of International Law, 2nd ed., (Leyden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1968), 35-49.

Soon after this, his work became more concerned with the Law of Nations. In 1584, he was consulted by the government in the Mendoza Case, in which the Spanish Ambassador was found to be actively plotting against the Queen. His recommendation, that the envoy be courteously deported, was followed. In the field of international law, his first major work was De Legationibus, dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney whose qualities, he thought, every ambassador should emulate. In 1586, he was chosen to accompany the embassy of Sir Horatio Pallavicino to the Elector of Saxony. It seems that he intended to remain in Germany, but he came back, and through the influence of Walsingham, was made Regius Professor of Civil Law. His oration at the Comitia of 1588 on the Law of War resulted in the publication, a decade later, of the work on which his reputation lies, De Jure Belli Libri Tres. Many other works, outside of his legal studies, came from his industrious pen; some of these dealt with classical philology, the Latin Vulgate, the Royal Prerogative, English politics and even witchcraft.¹⁶

According to Izaak Walton, Wotton attracted Gentili's attention through his three Latin discourses on the eye, de Oculo. Even allowing for Walton's exaggerations, Alberico's admiration for Wotton--he called him Henrice mi ocelle--was

¹⁶Van der Molen, Alberico Gentili, 42.

deep. The master was well satisfied with the ease with which his student learned Italian, his "connaturalness" for the language. Alberico must have played a large part in the younger man's decision to study abroad and develop his already evident versatility. To keep his interests wide-ranging, Wotton also penned at least one play, Tancredo, modelled on Tasso's Gerusalemme Liberata which had been published a few years before. The script, now lost, was well received at Oxford.¹⁷

In addition to studying the law under so fine a teacher, Wotton was fortunate to have spent most of his Oxford years at Queen's, which, under its provost, Henry Robinson, was entering its greatest period. Elected in 1581, he secured letters patent for the college's incorporation, and obtained a new charter to protect its property and other rights. Robinson also reinvigorated the discipline and restored the school's revenues which previous provosts had kept for their own use.¹⁸ It was appropriate that such a cosmopolitan figure as the young man from Kent entered the university as it was recovering from the shock of the Reformation and itself becoming more attuned to what was happening on the Continent.

¹⁷Smith, Life and Letters, 1, 5.

¹⁸Charles Edward Mallet, A History of the University of Oxford, 2 vols., (Oxford: The University Press, 1924), 1: 279.

Although the foreign scholars the school attracted were usually, like Gentili, devout Protestants, they were not bigots and sometimes were absurdly charged with being atheists or crypto-Papists. When Gentili went so far as to defend stage plays, he had to endure the barbs of a puritanical clique led by Dr. John Rainolds.¹⁹ It seems incredible to us now that a man of Rainold's stature--he was to become President of Corpus Christi--would object to sober material based on sacred or classical themes. Of this nearsightedness, the emigres and most of their students were free. Wotton, then, took from Oxford not only a traditional English scholar's training but also the partial equivalent of an intellectual Grand Tour. It was to serve him well.

* * *

¹⁹DNB, 7: 1005; Mallet, *Ibid.*, 1: 145-47.

For the year or so after leaving Oxford, little is known about Wotton's activities. It is quite likely that he was preparing for his work abroad, getting approval by way of a license from the crown and, most importantly, making financial arrangements; for his father's modest legacy would not cover the costs of a student on the Continent.

In his first extant letter written from London in the fall of 1589, Henry informs his brother Edward that he desires "to become the finest civilian in Basile,"²⁰ to prepare for a life in public service. Unfortunately, the financial concerns expressed so early in his career were to nip at his heels until his last years at Eton. Within a week, he was in Germany, the first stop in a stay of four and a half years on the Continent. Writing again to his brother, this time from the Hanseatic city of Stade on the Elbe, he recounted his impressions: witch burnings, wandering deserters from the Spanish Army in the Low Countries now turned to banditry and, as expected, the taverns that overcharged on poor quality English beer. Arriving in Heidelberg in late November after passing through Brunswick and Frankfurt, he met at the university the Scottish divine, Dr. John Johnstoun and the eminent theologian, Franciscus Junius, who later was to teach at Leyden.²¹

²⁰Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 228.

²¹Ibid., 231.

Although his time was well spent perfecting his German and attending disputations in the law, Wotton was anxiously awaiting letters of introduction from home, to help him gain admittance to the lectures of Francois Hotman, the great jurist of Basel. We never think of Wotton as the frivolous youth, not with parents such as his, but his perception of himself was quite different. "For before God," he writes, "I mean not to rest with time; and if any of my friends have conceived a loose humor in me, let them correct it for an error and assure themselves this, that I can teach my soul to run against the delights of fond youth."²²

Waiting for letters of introduction to Hotman availed the young scholar nothing, for the great humanist lawyer died in February, 1590. Coincidentally, his opponent, Cujas, was to pass from this world later that same year. Wotton left Heidelberg in the spring of 1590, certainly disappointed that he would never study under that great master. His destination now was the Frankfurt Fair, the twice-yearly gathering of literary men, merchants and pickpockets, an event not to be missed by a wandering bookman of Henry's color. As it would happen, fortune smiled on him as he made the acquaintance of one of Europe's foremost classical minds, Isaac Casaubon, a man only a decade apart in age from the Kentishman, yet

²²Ibid., 235.

seemingly already the proverbial aged sage. Neither one at that time realized that this mere exchange of greetings would develop into a firm friendship with Wotton as Casaubon's house guest for almost a full year.²³

From Frankfurt, he travelled to Altdorf instead of to Basel. Here, in Nuremberg's small university community, he stayed during the spring and summer of 1591, at the home of a lawyer, a friend of the jurist Franciscus Junius of Heidelberg. In this somewhat out of the way spot, he encountered--perhaps by design--Baron Edward la Zouche, probably a friend of Edward Wotton. (They had both served at the trial of the Queen of Scots.) Zouche, a cultivated individual, was like the younger man, of meager finances. Evidently the two had a real community of interests for their friendship lasted until the nobleman's death in 1625. In most of his letters to Zouche during this period, Wotton played the servile suitor, a posture he never was to modify very much in writing to those who were in a position to render him aid; and aid was always in the forefront of Henry's mind. Even allowing that the age was one of extreme deference, Wotton's fawning before his social superiors shows up now as one of his most undesirable traits. This small sample reveals Wotton's character well: "You have (my Lord) so far above mine own deserts, held me worthy of your Honour's love...I must

²³Mark Pattison, Isaac Casaubon 1559-1614, 2nd ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1892), 40ff.

ever live in the dear remembrance of your good favour..."²⁴

After leaving Zouche at Altdorf, he proceeded to the Jesuit University at Ingolstadt and then to Vienna where he arrived on St. Martin's Day, November 11, 1590. He was singularly fortunate to be housed with Dr. Hugo Blotz or Blotius, the Master of the Imperial Library. Here his study adjoined the main collection where he could work at will among the excellent manuscripts and, keeping his own table without a servant, the young Briton's living costs were very much in line with the English standard. Wotton's letters to the baron contain news of the Habsburg Court, much of it now thought trivial. It seems that the nobleman and numerous others were interested in a book on cipherwriting, the Stenographia of Johannes Trithem or Trithemius (1462-1516), an "instrument of great ill, if the hand be not good that holds it..."²⁵ Wotton tried to get the tome copied for his patron and nearly succeeded, even attempting to use "persuasion money," but bungled the job. The half that he sent to Zouche was probably faked.

Wotton himself realized that he was a novice, "...being utterly rude in such cases, of easy belief, too hasty a humour, and soon handled as they please to deal with me." If nothing else, he was aware that his "education" was just

²⁴Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 242.

²⁵Ibid., 254.

beginning and that "either years or experience, or repentance must teach me to correct a lack of discretion, mine own nature being so bad a master that way."²⁶ Nevertheless, his research must have garnered a massive amount of geo-political intelligence in the Imperial Library which he would put to good use later in both Venice and in his special missions for James I. Early in 1591, he received permission to travel with the Austrian ambassador to Constantinople but this was an elaborate ploy on his part, as his real intent was to go to Italy.²⁷ Wotton was very concerned to keep the English merchants in the dark, for various reasons which we may guess at. Like his brother Edward at a young age, he was already on crown business, and deception was part of the game he had to learn.

This does not mean that Wotton discontinued his pleasurable rummaging through the Habsburg manuscripts. Sharpening his skills both in ancient Greek and modern languages (of these, he knew at least four) took up much time, and his natural talent for conversation, mimicry, and play-acting must have been honed as well. This scholar-diplomat was always to pride himself on both his sincere English patriotism and on his cosmopolitan tastes. One of his well-

²⁶Ibid., 267.

²⁷Sir Henry Wotton, Reliquiae Wottoniae (London, 1685), 608.

known sayings sums up his cultivated outlook: "He travels with mean consideration, in my opinion, that is ever one countryman."²⁸

From the spring of 1591 until the same time the following year, Wotton was moving about Central Europe at a quick pace; Prague, again at Frankfurt where illness overtook him, then to Heidelberg and finally, in November, to the golden lagoon of Venice. This visit to his future diplomatic post lasted less than a week as both the climate and the courtesans made the Serene Republic unwholesome in his eyes. Padua came next and, joined by Lord Zouche, Henry was on the scene long enough to absorb something of the atmosphere before going on to Rome. To Dr. Blotz, he wrote that native courtesy should not blind one to the necessity of keeping a cautious eye on those same natives for "he who would always be safe in Italy must not always be good."²⁹

With incredible flamboyance, he entered Rome in the guise of a madcap German with a huge blue feather in his cap. This ruse, he was convinced, would be a safe cover, as who would believe that such a light-hearted simple character could be an enemy of the Roman interest? "Safety, and a conscience clear before my God were the things I sought there," he reported to

²⁸Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 258.

²⁹Ibid., 19.

Zouche.³⁰ By Lent, he reached Naples "through the goodliest country that God hath allotted unto mortal men to run their glory in, if virtue were as frequent as pleasure."³¹ Despite the danger from Turkish corsairs and thin-hulled ships, Wotton embarked on the feast of the Annunciation for the small Papal port of Nettuno where he spent Easter. Soon back in Rome, he encountered an Englishman, unnamed but probably a Catholic who recognized him. In less than a day, he fled the Eternal City, later boasting that no Englishman in allegiance to her Majesty, "hath seen more...of Rome than I; which I speak absolutely without exception."³²

This mixture of naivete and bravado was very characteristic of young Elizabethans. Although he would modify his "whore of Babylon" formula, some of the original brashness would remain with him to the end. By now both he and Zouche had been found out and placed on the "wanted" list in both Spanish and Papal territories. So Florence under Grand Duke Ferdinand seemed the logical place for an Englishman to find refuge. In safer surroundings, Wotton was able to record some of his early impressions of the Aldobrandini Pope, Clement VIII. He thought this capable

³⁰Ibid., 272.

³¹Idem.

³²Ibid., 274.

pontiff a disciplinarian, even surpassing Sixtus V, based on Clement's early edicts concerning criminal activity, prostitution, and monetary policy. Not unexpectedly, Wotton was way off the mark as to this pope's disposition, for Clement was of a far more liberal bent than his strong willed predecessor or his successor, Paul V.³³

In Florence, the young Englishman was learning the intricacies of Italian politics as well as perfecting his style in the vulgar tongue. The Tuscan capital was certainly the place for both but as yet he had still not lost the provincial Kentish view of his temporary home; as Florence was "a paradise inhabited with devils." And it was certain that "Venice hath scarce heard of those vices which are here practiced..."³⁴ His Florentine residence was the home of Baccio Buoni "who through his badness and wisdom together, was great with the Duke Francisco (Francesco de Medici, 1574-87) and in this Duke's time (Ferdinand I) hath been put down by worse than himself."³⁵ These lines Wotton wrote to the Earl of Essex after returning to England, mentioning Buoni's name among many others as reliable contacts for the favorite's

³³For a complete treatment of Clement VII's character, see Ludwig Pastor, The History of the Popes (London: Kegan Paul, 1933), 23: 24 ff.

³⁴Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 281.

³⁵Ibid., 299-300.

intelligence service. With some pride, he boasts of the many letters sent him on public affairs, now unfortunately all lost.

As already mentioned, Wotton was almost certainly under orders from London during part or all of his stay on the Continent. Zouche was informed that his friend received instructions "to remain in Tuscany, not far from the Great Duke's Court."³⁶ It is interesting to speculate on whether he was working directly for the Cecils at this time; such was the power of this father and son team that almost everything of worth from abroad reached their hands directly or through intermediaries.³⁷ This was to change significantly in the mid 1590s, as Essex amassed an excellent staff working out of his mansion fronting the Thames. Until overtaken by disaster in Ireland, Robin Devereaux's service, if not the Earl himself, proved a worthy rival to Burghley and son. So Wotton, the intelligence gatherer, was "playing the game" long before he became an operative at Essex House.

Even while Lord Zouche was in Italy, Wotton was compiling for him a list of cities, towns and resources in the Grand Duchy. It should not be thought that he gathered material by

³⁶Ibid., 287.

³⁷Cecil's intelligence service on the Continent is discussed in P.M. Handover, The Second Cecil (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1959), especially chaps. 12, 13, 27.

stealth. Elizabeth enjoyed good relations with the Florentines and "Enrico Wottoni's" open demeanor and sincere love of things Italian charmed his hosts. In October 1592, in company with Lord Darcy, then on Grand Tour, Wotton left Florence for Siena. Darcy had made it his personal task while in Italy to have books detrimental to the queen's or the Protestant interest banned or burned. Although he received the cooperation of Ferdinand I, this passion did not make him a favorite of the Inquisition and even Henry might have been feeling the heat when he said the matter "mightily kindled the coals against his nation."³⁸ Wotton stayed with the Darcy party up to Pisa, and then to continue his assignment, proceeded to Livorno to view the Grand Duke's galleys. This port was assuming a much greater role in English commerce; eventually it would draw much trade away from Venice.

Wotton was housed in Siena with one of the more interesting characters he was to encounter in his travels, Scipione Alberti, who had been majordomo to Giovanni Caraffa, Duke of Palliano and nephew of Pope Paul IV. Without a doubt, old Scipione was a dungeon-full of information, having escaped the lion's jaw on numerous occasions. Elizabethans thrived on stories of Italian perfidy and here it was first hand; a budding diplomat would never gain greater insight into the

³⁸Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 292.

lower realms of politics than through the reminiscences of this ancient courtier. If Wotton ever had a motto in his official life, it was that which came from the old man: "Il pensieri stretti, e il viuso sciolto" or now in the experienced traveller's translation: "Your thoughts close and countenance loose, will go safely over the whole world."³⁹

Siena was Wotton's last extended stop in Italy. Early in 1593, he made another trip to Rome which we might consider foolhardy but which was probably safe enough considering the personal contacts he had made. Before leaving Siena, he had written to Zouche about a talk he had with the Jesuit Cardinal Bellarmine during his first visit to Babylon. Wotton had been in his German role discussing purely intellectual matters so he did not believe it dangerous to reveal the meeting in print.⁴⁰ With this final adventure in Papal surroundings, he started the trek to Geneva via Genoa, Milan and the Grisons. Besides being a convenient place to study French, Geneva was also the home of Isaac Casaubon in whose house the Englishman would stay. Living with the Huguenot scholar must have been a profound experience since this devout man, in the trying environment of the war-torn Calvinist capital, had built a

³⁹Ibid., 22.

⁴⁰Ibid., 294.

great reputation as a master of the Greek language.⁴¹ Wotton himself thought the place a "marvellous unpleasant" town but he wanted to receive a thorough grounding in French even if it was "upon these skirts of Savoy." He and Casaubon were "rather scholars than politicians and sooner good than wise."⁴²

While Wotton was staying with Casaubon, he wrote for the most part, The State of Christendom, without exaggeration one of the most unusual books penned by an Elizabethan. It did not go to press until 1657, eighteen years after the author's death, almost certainly because it was "dangerous print" during his lifetime. Even though Wotton was the sole author of the body of the work as it now stands, he must have used material written by an English political exile who had spent decades on the Continent and was trying to make his way back to Britain. Pearsall Smith believes that this was a literary device, but if so, it was a foolish one; Wotton was experienced enough to know that any subject of Elizabeth dealing with an exile, especially a Catholic, could incur more than the mere displeasure of the Queen. Like any Englishman of his years and class, he was automatically suspect by being in Italy; Henry had written dutifully to his mother that he saw nothing wrong in holding discussions with Catholics. We

⁴¹Pattison, Casaubon, 21 ff.

⁴²Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 297.

now know that he was decidedly in the Protestant camp but that doctrinal squabbles were not his favorite fare. In this he was a true child of Elizabeth, but to many of his contemporaries, such carriage was suspect.

Aside from a few gems of political observation, The State is a tedious work weighed down with the most obscure classical lore. But Wotton was a perceptive prophet. Even after the Armada, how many pundits would say that Spain had seen its day? Casaubon's sometimes pedantic guest did. After spending much time in Italy studying the Spanish occupation, he became very impressed with the underlying strength of the French. Henry IV he saw as "nothing inferior unto the Spaniard, and much more able to pleasure or annoy him than any other Prince of Christendom."⁴³ If they would concentrate their power, Wotton thought that the French could be more than a match for Madrid in Italy. He was disappointed that the Venetians did not put more effort into combatting the Turks, believing that they had been at peace too long and had forgotten military discipline. In general, he had little respect for Italian fighting men: "their best soldiers are...of no great value; their courage is soon cooled...their best captains, by reason of their long peace, are of mean experience..."⁴⁴ While anti-

⁴³Sir Henry Wotton, The State of Christendom (London, 1657), 73.

⁴⁴Ibid., 138.

Spanish, Wotton was not blind to the virtues of Philip's governing class and soldiery stationed in Italy. They are "men of good account, of honourable parentage, and of sufficient lands and possessions who will not falsify their faith or forsake their King for any reward whatsoever. Truly, men of great honour prefer their credit before their gain..."⁴⁵

Of all of Wotton's predictions, the most acute are those concerning the Dutch. Although he favored the rebellion against Philip II, it was with reservations: "...not that I approve rebellion or allow subjects to rebel against their Sovereigns...(but) I disallow and dislike the Prince that will govern and rule his subjects in all things as he lists..."⁴⁶ He feared a totally humbled Spain more than the Habsburgs' plans to threaten Ireland or to reconquer the Netherlands. If the Dutch managed to unite all seventeen provinces, "it were greatly to be doubted that they would grow so mighty in time, that their might would make them ambitious...to encroach upon their neighbors."⁴⁷ Elizabeth had always been reluctant to help the native fighting men of the Low Countries against their overlords. While carrying on operations against the

⁴⁵Ibid., 242.

⁴⁶Ibid., 18.

⁴⁷Ibid., 258.

spanish crown, their fishing fleets and carrying trade were already hurting English merchants and craftsmen. Who could envision them as a future threat to British security, these burghers, brothers in the Reformed Faith?

If The State had a part which seriously jeopardized the future of its writer, it was the "Supplement," actually Wotton's review of Antonio Perez's Pedacos de Historia o Relaciones, written while he was in Essex's service, sometime in 1595. After Perez's work had been translated by Arthur Atey, another of Essex's secretaries, the queen, through the Cecils, blocked its publication. Although Perez was useful to the English for a while, he was personally despised by Elizabeth as a traitor to his sovereign; first by advocating the deposition of a reigning monarch and then by desertion of his homeland. Wotton entered the fray by defending Perez's legal status, seeing him as "residing in London but not as a rebellious fugitive (as many of our countrymen live in Spain) but as a gentleman that thought it better to forsake his lands and livings than to live under the tyranny and injustice of a cruel and ungrateful King."⁴⁸

⁴⁸Ibid., "Supplement," 1.
Antonio Perez (1540-1611), was Principal Secretary to Philip II of Spain. While in this position, he gathered considerable influence as the head of the faction opposed to the mighty Duke of Alba. After Alba's policy of harsh repression in the Netherlands proved a failure, Don Juan of Austria, the mercurial romantic half-brother of the king, was sent as a conciliator. The "Spanish Fury" sack of Antwerp (November 4

The Wottons had always, with the partial exception of Thomas, been good servants of the Crown; Henry would never be anything other than his ancestors, so his words here seem very uncharacteristic, very "un-Wottonian:"

For although a King be called God's minister, and his Judgements seem to proceed from God's own mouth, yet when he doth wrong and break God's commandments, he

and 5, 1576) made conciliation virtually impossible and the prince realized this.

Perez, at the start, was a supporter of Don Juan but became disenchanted as the great man's plans (invasion of England, seizing the crown, marriage with the Queen of Scots) diverged from those of the king. Moreover, Juan de Escobedo, whom Perez had nominated to be Don Juan's secretary, fell under his master's spell and instead of following Perez's line, became the prince's spokesman, returning to Madrid to demand more money for military operations.

Perez and Escobedo became bitter rivals and there is reason to believe that the latter had enough evidence to ruin Perez's career by revealing his sale of state secrets or even his treasonous contacts with the Dutch rebels. Perez moved fast and persuaded Philip that Escobedo was the evil genius behind Don Juan's scheme to gain the crown of England. Philip, ever eager to feed his suspicions, stood aside as Perez's hired assassins murdered Escobedo on a dark Madrid street, March 31, 1578.

Escobedo's friends did not rest. Through Mateo Vazquez, the king's other secretary, they pressed Philip to get to the bottom of the matter. Burdened with his own part in Escobedo's murder, the sovereign dragged out his final decision for over a year before ordering Perez's arrest. For eleven years, the man languished in strict confinement until his friends managed to engineer his escape from Madrid to Zaragoza in Aragon. Here, he was jailed for his own protection but Philip, blocked legally by the complicated liberties of that province, turned to the Inquisition to bring Perez to justice. This ploy did not work as a friendly Aragonese mob prevented his transfer to another prison and even managed to free him. Instead of fleeing abroad immediately, Perez, of Aragonese ancestry, intrigued to set up an independent state under French protection. With the arrival of royal troops, the revolt collapsed and Perez fled into Bourbon territory, November 11, 1591.

is not then God's minister, but the devil's, and then he is no judge, no King, because he leaveth God and fulfillleth not that charge which the Almighty hath laid upon him.⁴⁹

It was fortunate for Wotton that James I never saw his thoughts thus expressed; he was to fall from favor after his first tour of duty in Venice for a much lesser piece of careless writing.

By the middle of 1594, Wotton's stay with Casaubon was coming to an end. His financial situation, as usual, was precarious and his host certainly was not a well-to-do man. But Casaubon liked his fellow scholar and allowed him to run up a considerable debt. On his surety, the Englishman borrowed 124 gold crowns from a banker and this was on top of an existing loan of 106 crowns. To perfect his record of easy spending, Wotton bought a horse on Casaubon's good name and shaky credit. After promising that the money would be sent from England to reach the Frankfurt Fair in the autumn, Henry bid the great man farewell. Casaubon, already a high-strung person, was besieged by creditors when the money failed to arrive. With the help of a mutual friend, Richard Thomson of Cambridge and other scholars, he finally received the sum by Christmas.⁵⁰

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⁴⁹Sir Henry Wotton, Christendom, 22.

⁵⁰Pattison, Casaubon, 40-41.

When Wotton left Geneva, he travelled through the German Rhineland and the Low Countries, returning to London sometime in the fall. To us it would seem that a young man with his experience would be a valuable asset to Elizabeth's government, especially to the Cecils. His reports had been received, and almost certainly, Lord Zouche, now the queen's ambassador to the Court of Scotland and a close friend of the Cecil Family, had carried intelligence both of his own and Wotton's back to England. Place, though, was not an easy commodity to come by. Through his brother, the ambitious Sir Edward, the recent arrival found employment with Elizabeth's rising star, the Earl of Essex. The thoroughgoing mutual loathing of Devereux and the Cecils was still in the future, so Wotton was not forced to choose sides, hard and fast.

Essex House contained the earl's household and it was not a small one. His secretarial staff and intelligence-gathering apparatus were as good as that maintained by the government itself; and it was acknowledged that much information from Scotland and the Continent bypassed the Cecils and ended up in the earl's hands. What a more politically astute man could have done with these resources is a great historical question. Francis Bacon who, like his brother Anthony, was attached to the earl, warned Essex on numerous occasions not to seek martial glory and popular acclaim but to play the shrewd courtier. By disposition, this was impossible for the

restless nobleman who thrived on dreams of single combat with Spanish dons.

We know very little of a direct nature of Wotton's dealings with his employer; only one report and one letter to the earl survive. There must have been several hundred over the five-year period ending with the Irish debacle. In his old age, Sir Henry, then Provost of Eton, penned a short piece titled A Parallel Between Robert, Late Earl of Essex and George, Late Duke of Buckingham. Decades after the event, Wotton still admired the earl, and although he did not involve himself in the machinations that led to revolt, he was faithful to his lordship, not playing false with him, as by some accounts, Francis Bacon did.

Unlike his step-father Leicester, the younger man, according to Wotton, was tied down by "a Queen's decline or rather with her very settling age..."⁵¹ The earl's father having died without reaching thirty, ironically in Ireland, young Essex's education at Cambridge was looked after by the eagle-eyed Lord Burghley. For those who would see the earl as a mere light-minded fellow playing at knightly pursuits, Wotton answered that "the Earl's intellectual faculties were

⁵¹Sir Henry Wotton, A Parallel Between Robert, Late Earle of Essex and George, Late Duke of Buckingham (London, 1640), 2.

his strongest part..."⁵² Having had numerous opportunities to witness his varied abilities, Wotton insisted that "the Earl was a very acute and sound speaker when he would intend it, and as for his writings, they are beyond example, especially in his familiar letters and things of delight at Court..."⁵³ This is strong praise coming from a wordsman as able as Wotton, who next to Bacon, was the leading letter-writer of his age.

Within less than a year, the now-experienced secretary was in the upper ranks of the household; he was also attending the Middle Temple, with the intention, like many of his class, of exposing himself to Common Law training without advancing to the Bar. Toward the end of 1595, Wotton was sent by the earl to Paris, involving himself in one of the more bizarre episodes in the saga of Antonio Perez. From France, Perez's English secretary, Godfrey Aleyne, was sending his master's communique back to his own father as well as to Essex. Wotton's job, with the Spaniard's help, was to trick Aleyne into returning to England under the pretext of carrying very sensitive materials and then returning them to Perez with a sum of money. Needless to say, in arriving home in Wotton's custody, the unwitting Aleyne never finished his ostensible

⁵²Ibid., 8.

⁵³Idem.

mission. Instead, both he and his father were locked up in the Clink for a six months' stay, but without formal charges. Were the Aleyns in the pay of Philip II or the Cecils or both? Only the fact of the younger Aleyn's disloyalty is clear.⁵⁴

Perez had worn out his welcome during his first stay (April, 1593 - July, 1595) and the intelligence he had carried with him from the Continent quickly became old stuff. Housing and feeding such a pretentious guest strained the pocketbook of the Essex circle, and emphatically, the Spaniard was not a grateful exile. The Cecils, whatever they thought of him to begin with, were becoming disgusted with Perez, for his presence at Essex House drew other Catholics--the pro-Catholic charge was later to be levelled at the Earl during his treason trial--English recusants and foreigners who also brought hot coals down on their own heads for brushing up against a traitor. Perez offered his services to Elizabeth while he was ostensibly in Henry IV's keep but was turned down. After returning to France, he became a member of the conseil d'etat but continued to send back information in violation of his oath.⁵⁵

When Perez returned to England for a second time in April,

⁵⁴Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 31.

⁵⁵A recent commentary on the neglected Perez episode is that of Gustav Ungerer, ed., A Spaniard in Elizabethan England: The Correspondence of Antonio Perez's Exile, 2 vols. (London: Tamesis Books, 1974-76), 1: 189-190, 301.

1596, he was only a minor figure in the entourage of the Duc de Bouillon's mission to negotiate an alliance with Elizabeth. On this occasion, he wanted to reestablish his old links to Essex House but was received coolly.⁵⁶ Essex was preparing for the attack on Cadiz, and Perez, as a client of Henry IV, was not favorable to it. The spring of 1596 altered the military situation in northern France, for when English troops were withdrawn from the Netherlands for action in Spain, the Dutch pulled their own men out of Bourbon territory to protect the Low Countries. Spanish arms quickly went on the offensive in Picardy and took Calais on April 10. Western European court opinion thought that Perez wanted to deliver a blow against Philip II by joining the Essex expedition. The Venetian ambassador in Spain, Agostino Nani, wrote that Perez was doing all he could "to arouse the Queen of England and the other allies to employ their forces against Spain."⁵⁷

To Henry IV, the Cadiz venture was madness, not only for his own interests but for England's whose interests demanded a coast across the Channel free from Spanish occupation. But the earl's plan was both bold and innovative; it was Essex at his best. It is likely that an earlier thrust against Spain

⁵⁶Ibid., 305.

⁵⁷Calendar of State Papers, Venetian, ed. Horatio F. Brown (London, 1904), 9: 256-7. Henceforth CSPV.

would have prevented the fall of Calais and strengthened both the French and the Dutch positions. But the Council faction led by the Cecils blocked this on the sound basis of an empty treasury and near famine conditions in parts of the English homeland.

Henry Wotton, his brother James, John Donne and innumerable others sailed with Essex. James was knighted for gallantry and it is possible that Donne saw some action on that hot afternoon, since he was in personal attendance to the earl. In The Calme, the haughty cynical young poet expressed his motives:

Whether a rotten state, and hope of gaine,
Or to disuse mee from the queasie paine
Of being beloved, and loving, or the thirst
Of honour, or faire death, out pusht mee first,
I lose my end.⁵⁸

It is unfortunate that we have neither letter nor poem from Wotton on the Cadiz voyage. Aside from Walton and a single line in a letter written to Sir Robert Cecil from Plymouth, the record is blank. Essex covered himself with glory but came home a financial failure. His lack of practical sense--he left over 11,000 pounds of precious metals in the Citadel of Cadiz--infuriated the Cecils and confirmed them in their opinion of the earl as a competent soldier but vain wastrel. Actually, it was the extreme caution of the Lord Admiral,

⁵⁸Quoted in R.C. Bald, John Donne: A Life (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), 303-304.

Howard of Effingham, and the impatience of the other commanders that forced Essex back prematurely. Waiting for the Plate Fleet or holding Cadiz as a permanent English fortress like the Gibraltar of the future might have altered the entire picture. Wotton, no swashbuckling hero, went back to his desk, certainly no better off financially.

One interesting sidelight of the Perez affair was the Spaniard's involvement in the Italian "branch" of the earl's intelligence network, centering on Venice. Although Wotton's correspondence for this area is lost, we can assume that his Italian experience served him well. Elizabeth was usually hostile to the idea of sending permanent envoys to Catholic states even to friendly Venice, so Dr. Henry Hawkins, a full-time Essex servant, was sent on a semi-official basis which put both himself and his hosts at unease. A Venetian merchant named Antonio Bassadonna, whose brother was one of Perez's London contacts, was a reliable man on the scene to aid Hawkins and handle correspondence to and from Britain. England's cause was well served in Venice by the sack of Cadiz, but Hawkins, not being the queen's official ambassador and lacking credentials, was unable to capitalize on the good fortune.⁵⁹

Wotton became involved in a peculiar manner. It was his

⁵⁹Ungerer, Perez, 2: 169 ff.

task to send Hawkins his commission signed and sealed by Essex. Filippo Corsini, a London-based Florentine merchant and agent of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, was to be the courier. But the papers never arrived and, reminiscent of an operetta, were eventually found sitting on the window sill of another London merchant! Anthony Bacon, who by this time was Wotton's main antagonist at Essex House, believed the very worst of him; that the Kentishman was jealously trying to prevent Hawkins from exercising his duties in the Serene Republic. We do not know what he thought of Hawkins or vice-versa but lacking any defense by Wotton, we must conclude that he was guilty of pettiness or even deliberate negligence.⁶⁰ From June, 1596, Hawkins' work, as far as it went, was creditable; his weekly Italian "gazettes" were read aloud to the Queen, who received them favorably. Hawkins came home after March, 1598 and unfortunately was later caught up in the net of plotting at Essex House.

Both Wotton and Donne sailed together with Essex in 1597 on the "Islands' Voyage" which has generally been written off as a failure by historians as it had been by the queen. Wotton, though, saw it as giving the Spaniards food for thought. To him, his patron's voyage "to the Azores was the best, for the discovery of the Spanish weakness, and otherwise

⁶⁰Ibid., 172.

was almost a saving voyage."⁶¹ Donne's first extant letter describes life on board ship, the "stinke of 150 land soldiers" and "20 days of so very, very bad weather."⁶² The original plan was to attack El Ferrol on the northwestern coast of Spain in the hope of decimating an entire enemy fleet, but Essex believed that the Spaniards had slipped away to the Azores. While Wotton was probably with the earl, Donne went through the storms with Raleigh's squadron and was present, sword in hand, at the taking of Fayal. Aside from this small achievement, only three vessels from the Spanish West Indies Fleet were captured; the others escaped to the protection of the guns of the harbor fortifications of Angra.

Even worse than the loss of plate was the breakdown of the precarious association of Raleigh and Essex. Sir Walter had taken it upon himself to attack Fayal, to garner all the laurels for himself before the earl's arrival. Essex received the backing of the other commanders to court-martial Raleigh for his flagrant disobedience. His words, "That I would do...if he were not my friend" was his reply to the vultures among his hawks as recorded by Wotton.⁶³ But on the same voyage, he also showed his severe side as he threw a soldier

⁶¹Wotton, Parallel, 11.

⁶²John Donne, Selected Prose, Evelyn Simpson, ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), 303-304.

⁶³Wotton, Parallel, 12.

overboard with his own hands.

On his return to court, Essex was not well received by the queen although he was made Earl Marshall of England and received an outright gift from the sovereign of the dyestuff, cochineal, worth about L7,000, the most valuable single part of the booty brought back from the Azores. By the middle of 1598, he was on the way to disaster. Bitterly opposing Lord Burghley in Council on the matter of peace with Spain, he, at the same time, was reincurring Elizabeth's wrath for his personal behavior at court. But by the early spring of 1599, the queen had relented enough to appoint him Governor General of Ireland with vice-regal powers. There is no need to recount the specifics of the disaster. As the English and their few Irish adherents were winding down to defeat, Essex, as he said to Sir Christopher Blount, was contemplating returning to England with "some competent number of choice men" to eliminate his enemies on the council. Even before his departure, one of his secretaries, Edward Reynolds, told him that only three among the Queen's circle could be considered his friends: Lord Keeper Egerton, Archbishop Whitgift and Essex's own uncle, Sir William Knollys.⁶⁴ Thus it was not surprising that the shadows of the plotters loomed large in his decision to parley with the Earl of Tyrone.

⁶⁴DNB, 5: 882.

Not unnaturally, Henry Wotton had accompanied his employer to Ireland, and following the lead of most Englishmen before him, thoroughly hated the assignment. Fortunately, he was endowed with a generous supply of that most admirable of English traits, that of "muddling through." Soon after he arrived in Dublin, Wotton wrote back to his friend and associate, the same Reynolds, that everything was "in a good train and inclination." But as his lordship showed his limitations in a guerilla war, his secretary's weariness grew. John Donne wrote complaining that his friend Henry had not been a regular correspondent:

Went you to conquer? and have so much lost
Yourself, that what in you was best and most,
Respective friendship, should so quickly dye?⁶⁵

Wotton apologized but said that Donne's letters came "so fearfully, as if they trod all the way upon a bog." In the same piece, he complained that the earl's campaign was being unjustly attacked at court: "Whatsoever we have done...we know what will be come of it, when it comes amongst our worst enemies, which are interpreters. I would there were more O'Neales and Macguires and O'Donnells and Macmahons, and fewer of them."⁶⁶ Wotton himself would not be spared humiliation since he was part of the peace commission and was required to

⁶⁵John Donne, The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters, W. Milgate, ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), 74.

⁶⁶Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 308.

carry the truce documents back to court when the Earl so hastily returned. He and the entire Essex establishment were now under a cloud. It is probable that he realized that his active connection with the overbearing nobleman was coming to an end, although loyalty was never an issue. Wotton may have been busy trying to heal some of the wounds compounded by the foolish and even insidious advice which the impressionable earl was receiving.

Like many of Essex's staff, Wotton harbored a deep-seated animosity toward Henry Cuffe, his master's Greek Secretary. This former Oxford professor had been sent back to court during the Irish campaign to explain the problems the earl was having with Tyrone. Was he the source of the misinformation that Wotton complained of in his letter to Donne? Was he in the pay of Essex's enemies? These are unknown quantities. Cuffe had a serpentine tongue to go along with his nimble hand--he had penned Essex's Apology after the Cadiz Expedition--and his influence over the befuddled lord was strong during the year 1600.⁶⁷ Wotton thought him a sinister figure, "a man of secret ambitious ends of his own and of proportionate counsels smothered under the habit of a scholar."⁶⁸ Wotton might have been a bloodhound on Cuffe's

⁶⁷DNB, 5: 273-74.

⁶⁸Wotton, Parallel, 12.

trail, for the latter attempted to convince Essex that Wotton, through his brother Sir Edward, was trying to smooth the way for future employment with Sir Robert Cecil by betraying his present patron. The events of the next two years were to prove this charge an absurdity.

Five or six weeks before Essex's "fatal irruption into the City," his relatives convinced him to oust Cuffe from the household. For some days, the Countess of Warwick's advice to go out to the countryside 'round Greenwich and fully submit to the queen, gained the earl's full consent. But the fates decided otherwise. Naive Southampton, "whom Cuffe had gained," convinced Essex to take him back and thus "spun out the final destruction of his Master..."⁶⁹ There were many intangible factors in the earl's revolt. Wotton reflected in old age that some information "was neither discovered at (Essex's) arraignment nor after in any of his private confessions."⁷⁰

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⁶⁹Ibid., 13.

⁷⁰Idem.

Wotton was in London until late November, 1600. The only thing we can be certain of is that he remained on good terms with his patron until the time he left Britain for another lengthy stay on the Continent. Neither a military man nor a plotter, he could have no part in the doings at Essex House during the last fall and winter of the earl's life. It was no secret to Sir Robert Cecil that the pot was boiling, the only question being the extent of the overflow. From the moment after Essex's head was severed from his body, the debate over the respective roles of the government and the tragic hero in the revolt has continued. At the time, public opinion was definitely on the earl's side. Although the London populace, rabble and otherwise, did not join in Essex's frenzied attempt, at heart they were with him, against "Roberto il Diavolo" and the minions of the Court. After the earl's execution, the queen, until her death, was no more cheered in the streets of the City.

Wotton was no runaway from the earl's cause. Since he could no longer help Essex at home, perhaps he could present his case favorably abroad. On his person, he carried a letter of recommendation from his lordship to the Grand Duke of Tuscany praising his past services. Essex was a respected figure abroad especially in the eyes of the Italian princes and Henry IV. Cadiz had insured that. Wotton sailed somewhat under the cloud of royal displeasure but lessened a bit by the

earl's honorable reputation. After all, he had dogged his master's heels through the best and the worst of those foreign adventures. Only this time, he was not part of a spirited fighting fleet. On shipboard now was his nephew, Pickering Wotton, and a Lucchese gentleman, Alessandro Antelminelli, better known by his pseudonym, Amerigo Salvetti, who lived a long, charmed, but harrowing life pursued by assassins of his native city. The trio arrived in Paris where celebrations were still going on after the October wedding of Henry IV and Marie de' Medici. From there, they travelled through the king's dominions, probably embarking at Marsailles on a voyage to Livorno instead of attempting the Alpine passage during the dangerous winter season. Pisa was reached in late February, 1601 and Florence shortly afterwards. About the same time, the city was "invaded" by the mission of the English adventurer Sir Anthony Sherley, arriving from Persia with the Shah's ambassador and a train of courtiers, all in Europe to convince rulers, including the Pope, to act in concert with Persia against the Turk.⁷¹

Sherley and Wotton were old friends and kinsmen by marriage. Both were indebted to Essex and had sailed together with their patron to the Azores. Even though Wotton had "connections" in Florence, it was fortunate that he had a

⁷¹Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 35.

great stage manager like Sherley to provide an entrance to the grand duke. Since the ruler was in Pisa during those weeks, Henry must have returned there briefly with his cousin for the audience.⁷² This brief meeting, although at the time unrealized by either man, was to determine Wotton's entire future as a public figure. Returning to Florence, he received word from home that the earl was dead. To say that his heart was downcast would be an understatement. On April 1, 1601, he wrote to Casaubon sorrowing over his fallen hopes, believing that the life of a wandering exile would be his harsh fate.⁷³ Nevertheless, Wotton had to do his best in an environment which, he believed, would be his permanent home.

A few days after writing Casaubon, he sent a letter to Marcello Accolti, the grand duke's secretary, offering his services to the ruler. After what happened to Essex, he cast aside all thought of returning to England. He was bitter; the earl had been punished far more than his crime warranted. For a letter of his, it was overly passionate, filled with praise of his patron's noble character, youthfulness, natural grace, and most of all, his immense reputation among the common

⁷²Anna Maria Crino, "Trenta Lettere Inedite Di Sir Henry Wotton Nell' Archivio Di Stato Di Firenze," Rivista di Letterature Moderne e Comparata, 8 (1955): 107.

⁷³Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 311.

people.⁷⁴ Now that his great friend was dead, Wotton was left to promote his own interest, and as usual, was both elegant and persuasive in enumerating his qualifications to serve Accolti's master.

Ferdinand was impressed. The sophisticated Englishman, he felt, was a man he could depend on and trust. Contrary to what Pearsall Smith says, Wotton did not go to Rome with Sherley but remained in Florence until early May when he quickly departed for the Eternal City to bring letters and dispatches from Sherley back to the grand duke. Walton says that he had many friends at the English College, that "their humanity made them really so, though they knew him to be a dissenter from many of their principles of religion."⁷⁵ After having worked for Essex and having had close contact with papists at the earl's London residence, Wotton's friendship was considered genuine. He never seemed to be ill at ease with those Catholics who themselves were at odds with the Jesuits or other strong supporters of the Papacy. Sherley either was a Catholic or leaning that way. Henry, with his latitudinarian attitude, never went so far and prided himself on it. This visit to Rome, his last, was over quickly and he

⁷⁴Crino, "Lettere," 109.

⁷⁵Walton, Life of Wotton, 23.

was back in Florence by the end of the month.

Ferdinand I, a former cardinal, was a man of parts. Just being an independent Italian ruler was an achievement to boast of. Among his various talents was a thorough knowledge of poisons and antidotes, and it was through this odd circumstance that Wotton was launched on his diplomatic career. The grand duke's intelligence network had got wind of another plot against the life of James VI of Scotland, this time at the hands of Catholics, English or otherwise, trying to prevent a Protestant succession to the Tudor throne. Wotton's fortunes had taken an excellent turn. Belasario Vinta, his old friend and a ducal advisor, recommended him as a secret envoy to the Stuart king. In the guise of a gentleman, Ottavio Baldi, Wotton left Italy and travelled through Germany and Denmark. One of the Lucchese spies, still desperately on Salvetti's trail, called Wotton il volpone vecchio in his dispatches and thought his mission was to some of the German states.⁷⁶

Italians were not the only cloak and dagger men interested in the theatrical Briton. An Englishman named Thomas Wilson who was working for Cecil in Italy reported that Wotton "is gone from the Duke of Florence to the Princes of Germany in Ambassage...he hath letters also to some of them from the

⁷⁶Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 39.

pope."⁷⁷ Obviously, the Medici Duke had chosen his man well for the envoy reached Scotland after a perilous journey but with his new identity intact. Walton recounts the story of Wotton's very cordial reception by James in dramatic detail. Once the king knew the real identity of his visitor, Wotton's stock must have risen. Both his brother, Sir Edward, and Baron Zouche had served as the queen's ambassadors in the northern kingdom, which made Henry less than a stranger. All the Wottons seemed to have cut fine figures at whichever court they had occasion to frequent and James enjoyed the entire charade. After spending a successful winter in an inhospitable climate, Wotton returned to the warmth of the Mediterranean by way of Germany where he visited several scholarly friends.

Despite his fine performance, Wotton still keenly felt his exile from home; his having to bypass England carefully both to and from Scotland only confirmed this. In June, 1602, he wrote to Casaubon, a letter certainly more optimistic than that of the previous year but still envisioning a future in humane letters rather than public affairs.⁷⁸ Evidently he spent most of the next year in Florence playing the scholarly courtier. Besides reading in the Laurentian Library, he was

⁷⁷Idem.

⁷⁸Ibid., 317.

trying to persuade Ferdinand, through Vinta, that come spring, it would be in the ruler's interest to send a shrewd fellow like himself to France or the Low Countries where contacts with English friends would be more frequent.

If the embassy to Scotland confirmed the grand duke in his opinion of Wotton's talents, the death of Elizabeth in late March, 1603, restored Wotton's chances at home, especially with the coming of James to the throne. As already shown, Henry had never fallen out of Robert Cecil's favor. When the latter was clear of the queen's regimen and given free rein by the new monarch, he informed Sir Edward Wotton that his brother should no longer feel obliged to remain abroad. The life of an exile in Florence was not uncomfortable but it is evident that his talents were not being used to full effect. Walton says that Ferdinand "advised him to return presently to England and join the king with his new and better title and there wait upon fortune for a better employment."⁷⁹

Wotton's letter in which he petitions Cecil's favor is forthright, for "plainness" was his "best occupation." On his side, Wotton's esteem for Cecil was never impaired by his allegiance to Essex or by self-imposed exile. Although he owed the earl "fidelity...while he lived and reverence...after his death," Wotton now believed (for Cecil's benefit?) that

⁷⁹Walton, Life of Wotton, 27.

Essex "owed unto me...more regard...than I found about him."⁸⁰ When Wotton wrote Cecil in late May, 1603, he was already leaving Venice and heading northward with his nephew, pickering. Remarking on the long-term neutrality of the Republic, he thought it had "almost slipped into a neutrality of religion,"⁸¹ an idea about Venice that he always seemed to have concealed in the back of his mind. The Wottons were now on tour with the "civilest of Germany" and the fairest of France on their itinerary. Henry would be enjoying the bustle at the autumnal Frankfurt Fair, to await Cecil's answer, which would determine his immediate future. Although he did not land in England until late the following winter, he probably learned of his appointment as the new king's ambassador to Venice after he had left Germany and while he was handling some business in Paris.

On Henry's return, his brother, now Baron Wotton of Marley, brought him to court where James I, in the best of spirits, greeted "Ottavio Baldi" with a big hug. Is it not ironic that the fall of Essex and the subsequent sympathetic patronage of Ferdinand would lead to such preferment? Venice had already sent its ambassador, Niccolo Molin, and he reported that Wotton had received the honor of knighthood on

⁸⁰Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 317.

⁸¹Idem.

July 20. Molin had already met with the newly-fledged Sir Henry in June and found him "a gentleman of excellent condition, wise, prudent and able..."⁸² Before the month was out, the great diplomatic tradition of the Wotton family was to be renewed with credit and distinction.

⁸²CSPV, 10: 124.

CHAPTER II

English diplomacy under Elizabeth showed a reluctant involvement in Continental affairs, but involvement that was backed with the threat of military force. This was to continue under James I but with far less martial vigor.

Through most of her reign, Elizabeth was careful not to get trapped in the European quagmire but she did not hesitate to maintain her prestige even if it meant playing the protestant champion by countenancing the revolt of the Dutch against her anointed brother monarch, Philip II. Most of the time, her mailed fist was concealed by silken guile but the crown was respected, envied and perhaps, a little feared. Part of this was due to the dual efficiency of Francis Walsingham and William Cecil, two of the most capable royal servants anywhere in Christendom. Although without the advantage of permanent embassies in most of Catholic Europe, Gloriana, through her closest advisors, was able to stay on the offensive in the intelligence game. Students, seamen, merchants and travellers, most legitimate, some not, sent back a steady stream of information. And this news was a certain means of defense, as much as the Channel in a geographical sense. Having such resources, it was not a major feat for England to maintain a well-orchestrated foreign policy. But Elizabeth, for all her insularity, never gave in to the temptation of attempting full isolation. Her policy was one

of well thought out semi-withdrawal, able to retain the respect of foreign powers and likewise capable of handling rebellion in her own domain.

Under James, the isolationist aspect remained, as much a product of the monarch's sincere quest for peace as of Great Britain's (as it could now be called) lack of a lavishly funded military arm. What resulted under this intellectually-oriented king was an expansion of diplomatic activity in papist Europe, but unfortunately, a less realistic grasp of the "world situation." Spain's discomfort should have been England's opportunity especially after Madrid's failure to aid effectively the Irish, but the plodding lack of direction of James' administration, especially after Robert Cecil's death, made it a lost opportunity. Caught up in this web of inefficiency was Henry Wotton who spent all three of his tours of duty as the resident ambassador in Venice.

While intelligent, sincere and honest, Wotton was hemmed in by both the growing insignificance of his host nation and by his master's inability to season his idealism with the spice of hard-headed planning. Sir Henry really was not much different from James in temperament which explains in part why they got along so well from the beginning. No one could be more patriotic or even jingoistic when the occasion called for it, but like the king, Wotton was not a bellicose man. An uncritical admiration for his own Englishness led him into a

misreading of Venice's true stance on matters of trade and religion. Without stating it baldly, he believed that whatever was good for his nation could only benefit Venice and all of Italy. Even with his excellent grasp of the Italian language and culture, his sincere admiration of and friendship for Venetians, Wotton's failure to understand their ancient pride and deep humiliation in the face of reverses prevented him from becoming a great envoy.

Commercial problems including piracy were a continuing part of Wotton's agenda, but never an enjoyable one. Sir Henry was basically a comfort-loving scholar and the vigorous pace of the business world was not his forte. The Kentishman did try to iron out the differences between the English mercantile community and the Venetians but it was not a congenial task. He undoubtedly took pride in his countrymen's advances in commerce but it appears that he was little interested in Italian trade and industry. Yet as we realize today, the economic fluctuations on the peninsula had much to do with Britain's future in the Mediterranean. Wotton was the first modern full-time British resident in Italy; his relative unconcern with trade should not blind us to its importance. Commerce was Venice's life blood and its state of health colored that metropolis' entire approach to diplomacy, especially with the English and Dutch interlopers.

What was Venice's position in the European state-system

when Wotton arrived as the king's representative? One thing was evident. Despite being the focus of English interest in Italy, the Republic was a second-class power, settling into a long period of senescence. Even with her still immense mercantile wealth, the mere limitations of land, manpower and materiel put the city-state at a disadvantage with the likes of the Habsburgs, Bourbon France, or even the small but pugnacious Netherlands. In contrast, Wotton represented a realm which had declined slightly in military and naval ranking during Elizabeth's last years but which was moving steadily into the Mediterranean and Atlantic. This fact is often overlooked by critics of the early Stuarts who point to that royal house's failure to persevere in the aggressive stance that overcame the Armada and put down Ireland's attempt at independence under the Earl of Tyrone. In the face of these and Oliver Cromwell's later successes, the Stuarts have long been labelled as failures. Leaving James I's sincere love of peace aside, England's avoidance of major European conflict during the first half of the seventeenth century permitted her merchants to keep and reinvest their wealth almost at will.

The groundwork for expansion was founded on the skills of the Elizabethan seadogs who pushed into the Mediterranean both as legitimate traders and as pirates long before 1603. Although southern Europe and the Levant never provided a major

part of its total trade revenue, it is surprising how much wealth was brought home under adverse conditions.¹ British interest in this part of the Continent was spurred on not only by local events, but by what happened in northern and western waters. We have already mentioned the incredible advance of the Dutch who could both fight a war against the Spanish overlord and spread their wings as a world seapower.² The English were continually coming up against these rovers, and it was as much a matter of matching their cross-channel neighbors as pursuing profits that urged the London businessmen on. South of the rebellious Protestant Dutch-speaking provinces stood the mixed, turbulent counties of the present-day Belgium. Even before the outrages perpetrated by the Duke of Alva, Antwerp was slipping as the great entrepot of northwestern Europe, but in trying to crush resistance, Philip II's lieutenant ruined the economic life of his master's Flemish and Walloon subjects and made the River Scheldt a backwater. Portugal was a different case. Lisbon maintained maximum autonomy when Philip assumed that nation's crown in 1580, but adding another regal honor to the

¹Lawrence Stone, "Elizabethan Overseas Trade," Economic History Review, 2nd series, 2(1949): 51. Stone says that only about six per cent of the entire bulk trade originated there in 1601-02 but that some people did quite well in the business.

²For good succinct coverage of Dutch expansion see C.R. Boxer, The Dutch Seaborne Empire 1600-1800 (London: Hutchinson, 1965), 4-7, 16-22 and Charles Wilson, The Dutch Republic (New York & Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1968).

Habsburg collection would do nothing for Bourbons, Tudors or the Italian principalities.

In the State of Christendom, Wotton foresaw a great future for France. Certainly no other power could boast her resources; to the chagrin of other Christian realms, she had traded with the Turks since 1535 when Francis I signed his infamous treaty with Suleiman the Magnificent. English merchants willing to open up the eastern Mediterranean could see no reason to deny themselves legitimate commercial relations with the Porte especially if they could "sing the beard of the King of Spain" as well as turn a tidy profit. In 1580, the Sultan Murad bestowed a formal grant of liberties upon all Englishmen in the Ottoman Empire. Within a year, French intrigue succeeded in having it cancelled but the crown had approved a charter granting the new Levant Company a seven-year trade monopoly in its area. It was to the Turks' advantage to have both powers trading with them and also going for the other's throat, so the restrictions on the English were dropped. William Harboure, the first Elizabethan agent at the Sultan's court had to face the unrelenting hostility of both his Gallic and Venetian counterparts but his tact and forcefulness gave England a secure place in that trade sector.³

³Alfred C. Wood, A History of the Levant Company (Oxford: The University Press, 1935), 13. Also see article on Harboure in the Dictionary of National Biography, 8: 1200-01.

Finished cloth and tin made up the bulk of British exports not just to Constantinople but also to the Grecian isles and ports in Syria and Egypt. On return voyages to England and North Sea harbors, these tight, fast, and well-canvassed vessels brought raw yarn of all kinds as well as the more exotic commodities of the now more familiar Orient. So lucrative was this trade that L45,000 was ventured by investors up to 1584. In the Armada year, a single cargo was reported as being worth L70,000.⁴ Nevertheless, both piracy and the Spanish war cut into profits. Normal expenses, not to mention presents and outright bribes could lessen a return considerably; a pillage or sinking could create a loss of confidence by nervous backers.

While the Near Eastern trade proved a worthwhile enterprise, the Venetian market was still a maze of restrictions. At the time the Republic was deeply involved in combat with Turkey, the year 1575, Elizabeth granted to Acerbo Velutelli, a Lucchese residing in London, a ten-year monopoly on all goods imported from Venice. But heavy license fees and impositions caused the Senate to strike back with similar duties on English shipping and to affix export duties on currants and wines. These restrictions were so galling that Velutelli's business was bought up by a group of London

⁴Wood, Levant, 17.

investors; and with the queen's blessing, the luxury commodities from the Adriatic dominions were restricted to English hands until the Italians saw fit to lower or abolish their rates.⁵

Charters for both the Venice and Levant Companies ran out in 1588 and 1589 and rather than continue ruinous competition in dangerous waters, the merchants in their petition to Lord Burghley asked for joint incorporation. The new charter, granting a twelve-year monopoly, was issued on January 7, 1592. Its wording indicated an expansion undreamed of a few years before, an effort reaching out "by land through the countries of the said grand signior, the Sultan, into and from the East Indies lately discovered..."⁶ By 1595, fifteen ships and almost 800 sailors were in the trade; the year 1599 saw twenty ships in Italian waters alone.⁷ If for us an aura of intrigue and mystery hangs over Levantine dealings, for the English shipowner and investor Italy and her adjacent coasts and islands were still the main thrust of the Mediterranean trade. From Venice and her dependencies, Zante and Cephalonia, came the most profitable commodity, currants, in the amount of over two thousand tons and L11,500 per annum.⁸

⁵Ibid., 18.

⁶Ibid., 21.

⁷Ibid., 23.

⁸Ibid., 24.

From these figures we can assume that many merchants' daughters were well dowered, but it also signifies that trading roles were changing. Italy was becoming more the agricultural exporter and England the supplier of finished goods or of raw materials vital in resource-poor southern Europe.

About 1600, of all English manufactured goods carried into the Mediterranean, woolen cloth was in the vanguard. In fact there was little else produced in Britain that could become a standard item for foreign consumption. Even in 1640, after some industrial expansion, London exported less than £30,000 worth of manufactured goods other than textiles.⁹ Britons were undercutting the high-quality Italian woolens by looting cheaper and lighter "new draperies" but their expertise in accumulating specie was shown to an even higher degree by their mastering of the carrying trade between Mediterranean ports. This was the first and for a long time the only region where English ships took a large portion of that valuable foreign commerce between foreign nations.¹⁰ Today, such an exploit gains only a shrug of the shoulders, but the Mediterranean, which to us is a small enclosed sea, was to the

⁹F.J. Fisher, "London's Export Trade in the Early Seventeenth Century," Economic History Review, 2nd series, 3(1950): 153.

¹⁰Ralph Davis, "England and the Mediterranean 1570-1670" in Essays in the Economic and Social History of Tudor and Stuart England (Cambridge: The University Press, 1961), 132.

mariners of the period a huge expanse comparable to the modern Pacific. Add to this the hazards of local warfare, piracy, weather, and the superstitions of the deep, and one begins to appreciate the exploits of sailors from northern waters. England's only serious rival in this field was the ubiquitous Dutchman whose small dependable craft seemed to be everywhere. In competition with him, British commerce suffered from one disadvantage and it was major: a lack of significant growth in the size of the merchant marine.

The deficiency was recognized as far back as 1540 when tonnage--less than 50,000--could not even meet the needs of local shipping. In the mid-Tudor period, it is probable that home-produced goods could be transported in English holds only about half of the time. By acts of 1541 and 1563, the government sought both to encourage shipbuilding especially of the large variety and the movement of domestic goods in English flag vessels. The act of 1563 also prohibited foreigners from engaging in the coastal trade which says much about the deteriorating state of native seafaring under Henry VIII.¹¹ Alien competitors in northern waters were not only involved in the carrying trade but also in smuggling and piracy. English sailors were losing out in all three normally related fields of endeavor. If this act was enforced as most

¹¹Sybil M. Jack, Trade and Industry in Tudor and Stuart England (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1976), 97.

other prohibitory statutes, its effect was checkered, but the government's bounty of five shillings a ton on ships over a hundred tons was generally a success. By 1583, total tonnage had risen to 67,000 and the number of ships over a hundred tons to 173.¹² This advance was tied in part to the aforementioned political and economic problems of England's rivals which should have given the merchant marine a clear advantage but did not, for the gods of war had other ideas.

The two decades 1585-1604 of cold and hot warfare between England and Spain were a mixed blessing. Normal trade was disrupted but mariners' skills were honed and profits padded for certain enterprising individuals in the privateering business. This in itself fostered a boom in the construction of relatively large vessels. Shipyards had to be expanded both to honor private contracts and to keep up the first line of defense, the navy. The eternal question of the economic historian arises here as in all periods: was the war an impetus or an impediment to the advance of English commercial interests in the Mediterranean? A look at English trade with Spain and her possessions might offer some clues. Those involved in the Iberian trade or clandestine dealings with local officials in Spanish America were naturally upset by a protracted war. Robert Cecil, while no less patriotic than

¹²Ibid., 98.

the Hispanophobes, realized the abnormality of a situation which was wrapped up in the passions and idiosyncracies of Elizabeth and Philip II as they both advanced in age. Even though an investor in the privateering game, Cecil knew that the profits from normal trade far exceeded those of irregular trading. Prosperous commerce in southern waters required, at the very least, the absence of open warfare with Spain.

During this period, one sign of the realignment of powers was the relationship of Turkey to England and Venice. While dabbling in religious opposition to the Ottomans, both Christian states "traded with the enemy." In following this policy Venice, unlike England, did not have the luxury of choice, for she was in confrontation with her old adversary almost everywhere her commerce extended. Modern western prejudice may wonder at this accomodation since the armchair crusaders have always cast the Turks as the arch-villains of Europe. Actually, some parts of the Turkish imperial sprawl were fairly well run and others hardly at all. As with any multi-cultural and-religious state before the present century, this vast checkerboard was a mixture of competence and cruelty. Venice, famous for her serpentine dealings with foreigners, was exposed to a long-term "learning experience" with the Turkish dragon.

The Republic had to coexist with, and indeed live upon, this great mass as "ivy draws its nourishment from the tree to

which it clings."¹³ It was not easy for these proud merchant aristocrats to reach a modus vivendi with those who had captured their eastern island empire, including the jewel, Cyprus. Unlike the Genoese fronting the Mediterranean and oriented toward Spain and the Atlantic, Venice was hemmed in on both sides of the Adriatic. Apart from shipbuilding, she possessed no heavy industry such as mining or metallurgy. Her prosperity was founded on entrepot trade and a famous collection of luxury workshops turning out fine cloth, glassware and books. And these could not provide the resilience necessary to remain an important power.

In addition to the war with Turkey and the loss of Cyprus, the homeland was swept by the plague from 1575 to 1577 which probably took a third of the population.¹⁴ These were substantial setbacks, but the grand dame did recover in the eighties to what may be called a position of solid stability. Venice's main enemy in Europe was likewise Constantinople's. Just as the hatred of the Spanish Habsburgs was directed at the proudest Italian free state, the Turks encountered the

¹³Fernand Braudel, The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, trans. Sian Reynolds, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1972-74), 1: 342. Much of the general background information in this chapter comes from Braudel's classic work.

¹⁴Frederick Lane, "Venetian Shipping During the Commercial Revolution," American Historical Review, 38 (1933): 233.

combined power of Madrid and Vienna in the Mediterranean and on the Hungarian plain. This accidental alliance brought coals down on Venice's head from the Papacy and the Habsburgs, who themselves were at odds over Spanish domination in Italy. Thus Venice, in a sense, was the Turkish "window on the west" as well as the freest occidental outpost for both refugee Greeks and Levantine Jews.

In this period, roughly coinciding with the reign of Henry IV of France, Venice is usually portrayed as rising to a peak and then starting its long two-century slide to total submergence. If some industrial production figures are the criteria, the portrait has an element of truth; but bare statistics can lead down a false path. When Wotton arrived in mid-year 1604, Venice was probably more secure than at any time in the previous half-century. On paper, Spain was free to deal with the Italian states that strayed out of its orbit, but in spite of its peace treaties with France in 1598 and England in 1604, Philip III's realm was a besotted giant already saddled with one bankruptcy in 1596, with another to come a decade later. If the Spanish galleon's decks were now clear for action, so too were French and English sails ready to take on new seas. The Dutch, with whom Spain was forced to sign a humiliating truce in 1609, were enjoying immensely the discomfort of their former tormentors.

While Venice gained unofficial allies in the west, her position in the eastern sphere also brightened through the

financial plight of the Turks, marked by the debasing of coinage, increased taxes, and property confiscations. The Habsburg-Ottoman war, covering Hungary and parts of Romania, lasted from 1593 to 1606 and mauled both sides. It was only through Austrian ineptitude that the Turks were allowed to escape the consequences of their corruption and preserve the status quo. Venice was thus able to watch all her potential foes spread fire and sword--against one another.¹⁵

Although rulers were willing to spill blood as long as the taxes flowed, all but the most convinced militarists realized that long-term peace equalled plenty. In self interest, Turks and westerners desired a prosperous mercantile sector protected from pirates and bandits, at least from those not in their pay. One reason the English and the Dutch did so well after entering the Mediterranean was that they could afford to absorb some losses from corsairs and natural disasters, as long as their trade prospered elsewhere. With the Turks and the Venetians it was otherwise. Even with an huge expanse of blue water to sail upon, both states were circumscribed in their maritime trade, the Ottomans even more than the Italians. Constantinople not only had to deal with inflation, a corrupt bureaucracy and the ever-present threat of western or Persian attack but also with its own client

¹⁵A very interesting look at the Turks is found in Carl Max Kortepeter, Ottoman Imperialism During the Reformation: Europe and the Caucasus (New York: The New York University Press, 1972), especially chapter nine.

states along the North African littoral which were given to rebellion. "Christian" pirates were even sheltered there to prey upon vessels loyal to the Prophet.

A more interesting group of crusaders for profit were the Uskoks, descendants of military colonists settled in Croatia by the Emperor Ferdinand I. After the truce of 1547 between the Habsburgs and the Porte, these predominantly Slavic fighting men found themselves out of work, but after retraining as seamen, turned to piracy using Segna or Senj as their principal lair. Moslems were the first victims but soon the well-laden vessels of Ragusa and Venice became prime targets. Vienna, through its deputies for Inner Austria in Graz, tried to ease the effect on the Venetians, but the Uskok business had become a major operation, drawing adventurers and professional thieves from everywhere. Senj became a paradise for the unscrupulous, an Adriatic version of the Caribbean Port Royal.¹⁶

For some time, Venice was unwilling to spend enough to lay the threat to rest. When the Senate did decide on concentrated force, it was after the renewal of hostilities between Austria and Turkey in 1593. After raiding and sacking Senj and Croatian coastal villages, they were bitterly denounced for impeding the Christian war effort! It is

¹⁶For the Uskok menace, see Gunther Rothenburg, "Venice and the Uskoks of Senj 1537-1618," Journal of Modern History, 33, (1961): 148-56.

curious that no one was particularly upset when Venetian lives and property were lost. Some Christians seemed to be more equal than others. Although the Uskoks were dealt a severe blow, this was not a war of extermination. The brigands plied their trade but with less boldness. They were not put entirely out of action until a strong effort rooted them out in the Uskok War of 1615-18.

Ironically, these renegades were responsible for one major commercial advance; a significant increase in the volume of land traffic in the eastern Mediterranean and the development of the Dalmatian port of Spaleto. Originally, the plan for a major harbor facility on that coast was the brainchild of a Venetian Jew, one Michael Rodriguez;¹⁷ but the notorious complacency and conservatism of the government prevented its implementation until 1591. When finally completed a few years later, the project "virtually caused a revolution in transportation." In the early seventeenth century, approximately 15,000 colli or bundles of merchandise went through the port annually; and this was not merely a temporary success, but a permanent enterprise, one so prosperous that the Republic's rivals desperately tried to incite the Turks to destroy it.¹⁸

¹⁷Brian S. Pullan, Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice: the Social Institutions of a Catholic State to 1620 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 568-71; Braudel, Mediterranean, 1: 286.

¹⁸Braudel, Mediterranean, 1: 287.

A proposal to destroy such an enterprise was ludicrous since the Porte stood to gain far more from a Venetian-held investment in this area than a captured one run by themselves at a distance. Piracy was undoubtedly a strong factor in Venice's decision, but an equally attractive incentive was the lower cost of caravan traffic in Turkish territory as compared with the seaborne one which involved marine insurance, sailors' wages and ship maintenance fees. For years to come, the burden of expenses at sea kept land routes in the area itself and in adjacent countries a practical alternative. It was only when northern shipping broke the cost barrier that grass began to grow where pack animals once had struggled with their loads.

Statistics of increasing traffic both on land and sea come into conflict with the interpretation that puts Venice into irretrievable decline after 1600. Generally, it is believed that northern Italy suffered a gradual hardening of the economic arteries from about this time. Cited is the falling rate of productivity in the silk, paper, and woolen industries of Genoa in the 1590s as well as the precipitate drop in wool cloth manufacture in Florence from about 1580 to 1600. It is now thought that the strongest indicator was the downward slide of the critical banking and shipping businesses. Italy depended heavily on foreign trade especially its "invisible" exports: financial management and trans-shipment of other

people's goods.¹⁹

There is no doubt that the guild-dominated wage structure priced certain products out of the market and that wages were rising faster than in surrounding countries. These can be considered symptoms of a disease but how severe was the illness? Or was it a shift in the patient's personality rather than in the degree of sickness? Although Venice had recovered well from the troubles of the 1570s, she was subject to hidden forces outside the economic realm; and alone, the loss of morale is not a sufficient answer. She was caught between Scylla and Charybdis, between her pride as an ancient sovereign power and her inability to come to grips with the aggressive new national kingdoms. Certainly, the lack of foresight on the part of the merchant aristocrats in dealing with the ocean transport problem was glaring. Shrewd business practice called for a new tack but shrewdness has its limits, and frustration faced the state at every turn. That is one reason why it may be fruitless to speak of reforms coming sooner or later. Venice could not turn herself into a warrior commune--a new Sparta--at this juncture or at any other!

Trade and production statistics do not reflect it, but the Republic was already caught in a vise before the spate of

¹⁹See Carlo Cipolla, "The Economic Decline of Italy" in Crisis and Change in the Venetian Economy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, ed. Brian Pullan, (London: Methuen, 1968), 130ff.

peace treaties gave the great powers some relief. In or out of combat, they gave little heed to the wishes of the Italian states, no matter how venerable. In theory, England and France were friendly powers, yet the former--with the Dutch--stood sponsor to some of the worst raiding activities in the Mediterranean; and the latter proved an ungrateful unashamed manipulator of the Serenissima for her own anti-Habsburg purposes. Henry IV, in particular, was indebted to Venice, as she was the only Catholic power of consequence to recognize his kingship from the beginning and to stand by his interest in Rome in the face of Spanish hostility. It is with this impossible situation that statistics should be gauged.

The "new look" in Venetian life is best shown by the loss of half her flag shipping between 1560 and 1600.²⁰ Businessmen were still piling up more wealth which shows that the country had greater financial depth than critics are willing to grant. But no more would she be a major shipbuilding center. Unlike general trade, this pivotal industry did not revive in the 1580s. Construction costs quadrupled between 1550 and 1590, while the wages of skilled seamen doubled. Anachronistic and outright silly requirements burdened the entire maritime enterprise and these benefitted no one except foreigners.²¹

²⁰Domenico Sella, "Crisis and Transformation in Venetian Trade" in Pullan, Crisis, 92.

²¹Frederick Lane, Venice: A Maritime Republic (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 384ff.

The late sixteenth century was a time of innovation in shipbuilding and it was in northern seas that modern swift vessels made their appearance.²² Such masters were the Dutch who developed the light roomy-hulled flyboat which was as adept at negotiating intricate Adriatic inlets as its home waters. The Venetians attempted to meet the foreign challenge with the construction of the marciliana, a flat-bottomed broadship with square sails. Although these almost defenseless vessels were tasty morsels for pirates, the much lower insurance and freight rates more than offset the losses.²³

We should suspect that this type of craft kept many small entrepreneurs in profits both by open trading and by smuggling. Venetian merchants not only tried to shorten the sea-road to the Turkish dominions by building the port of Spaleto but also found it expedient to use the marciliana to carry merchandise to the Abruzzi ports and then by overland trails to Naples. By so doing, they avoided a pirate hotbed,

One regulation still in effect in the 1590s required state galleys to carry on board a number of young gentlemen archers, this at least a full century into the age of heavy firepower.

²²For an interesting detailed chapter on Dutch shipbuilding of the period, see E.W. Petrejus, "The Dutch Flute" in The Great Age of Sail, ed. Joseph Jobe, Lausanne: Edita Lausanne, 1967).

The flute, first built at Hoorn in 1595, was a cargo ship larger and faster than the flyboat. It was ideal for the heavier cargoes that the Dutch were soon bringing in and out of the Mediterranean.

²³On the marciliana, see Alberto Tenenti, Piracy and the Decline of Venice (London: Methuen, 1968), 155.

the Ionian Sea. Set maritime policy forbade these ships from sailing beyond Zante. Long voyages to the Levant were to be made by the big carracks that could double as auxiliaries in wartime or by galleons developed in Crete with high lateen sails very much like those used on war galleys. Attempts to substitute the northern square sail for the triangular "Latin" type failed. This was unfortunate, as the galleons, which in some ways resembled the jack-of-all-trades square-rigged bertone, could have been modernized to good effect.²⁴

For Venice to have enough sizeable vessels, an intelligently drawn construction program had to be kept vigorous. Instead, the old nemesis of archaic business methods blocked cost-cutting. Between the trees on the Alpine slopes and the launched ship stood a legion of middlemen. Severe limitations were put on the builders (for example, no ships over a hundred tons could be constructed in private yards); there was little chance in the industry for middle-class owner-managers of real ability to plan major vessels. In addition, operators were forbidden to buy ships abroad. The Senate tried to keep the yards humming with massive loans but this was likewise a failure; costs were still lower in foreign shipyards. By 1590, the situation was so critical that only twelve first-rate vessels were flying the colors of

²⁴Ibid., 104, 153 for a description of the bertone.

St. Mark. Finally, the pressure on the government became so great that the ban on buying the necessary tonnage abroad was lifted. This had a salutary effect, for by 1599, only one-third of all larger ships paying anchorage tax in the harbor of Venice were foreign-owned.²⁵

It was a safe wager that this enlightened policy would not stand unamended. Foreign vessels were forbidden from plying the direct sacrosanct Venetian-Levantine route. Three years later, in 1602, the state was still trying to discourage potential purchasers of foreign ships by restricting their use to home waters. This was achieved by keeping their holds empty until all native-built vessels were filled and by discriminating against them in matters of insurance. It did not take long for this nonsensical bureaucratic interference to be dropped.²⁶ By 1605, large ships of over 360 tons were twenty-six in number, the majority foreign-built.²⁷ But the Venetians could not adapt themselves to their operation with the efficiency of northern seamen. So necessity dictated not only the purchase of foreign bottoms but the hiring of Dutch and English crews. Tarnished though their patriotism might appear, the merchants preferred bowing to economic reality

²⁵Lane, "Venetian Shipping," 236.

²⁶Sella, "Crisis and Transformation," 93.

²⁷Lane, "Venetian Shipping," 231-32.

rather than risking their opulent standard of living. A slow drying-up of the seamen's trade seemed an inevitable by-product of the change but most shipyards stayed intact, repair and maintenance taking the place of major production. Actual port activity dropped little if at all.²⁸

At the turn of the century, northern shipping still comprised only a small percentage of the Mediterranean's total tonnage, and it could be called insignificant, in ratios from 1:15 to as little as 1:35. Mare nostrum was still the province of native seafarers, with the northerners an anomaly, useful in certain quarters but not decisive. In addition, half of the alien ships were in the service of some local prince or economic group.²⁹ In other ways also, concentrating on the decline of Venice at sea can be misleading. During the late sixteenth century, businessmen were shying away from the maritime field. Capital avoided trade in bulk items like grain or government-regulated salt. Even though there were big profits to be made on such shipments, the risks were also

²⁸Braudel says that about two hundred smaller ships were plying their trade at the time and that the volume of traffic remained the same until 1625. Sella and Tenenti, he maintains, are far too pessimistic.

Also see Richard Tilden Rapp, Industry and Economic Decline in Seventeenth Century Venice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 138.

Rapp points out the paradox that Venice underwent a relative decline in commerce and industry with no absolute decline in overall income.

²⁹Braudel, Mediterranean, 1: 447.

high. The relative slump in trade encouraged investment in government loans, foreign exchange or land speculation on the terraferma.³⁰ For the middle-sized investor especially, playing the money market was far safer than sharing in a cargo likely to end up in pirate hands. Generally, by the 1590s, the shipping business per se had been abandoned by all but the very wealthy and the small entrepreneurs satisfied with modest gain.³¹

It is not surprising that there should be a shift from some forms of private investment to the relative safety of government-backed opportunities. Modern states, Venice included, were the keepers of the coffers, the main collectors and redistributors of revenue. Modern warfare's backbreaking financial burden alone confirmed this, but worthy of mention are the mints whose workloads expanded greatly, the state banks, and major works such as Venice's Arsenal, then the world's greatest single manufacturing center. Thousands of people, from the aristocracy to the poorly paid free rowers in the Venetian navy earned their keep from the state's largesse. Fueling this machine, for better or worse, was the mind-

³⁰See S.J. Woolf, "Venice and the Terraferma" in Pullan, Crisis.

Woolf is convincing in upholding the reputation of investors in mainland properties. It was not a cowardly act to move with the times and leave the sealanes to others.

³¹Braudel, Mediterranean, 1: 447.

boggling increase of silver in circulation. In some way, it was hinged to the across-the-board price rise although in what way and to what extent is still a very heated issue.

Fernand Braudel and Carlo Cipolla both question the thesis of economic dislocation brought on by American silver, the latter calling it a "pseudo-revolution." Italy was the real center of monetary action in Europe. In the period of the moneda larga, the Venetian mint or Zecca stamped out an average of a million coins each in gold and silver every year. The Zecca even bought on a contract basis; for example, in March 1605, to the value of 1,200,000 ducats. Yet two years before, Venice had a "full" treasury but was so short of silver coinage that the workers at the Arsenal went unpaid.³² Despite the enormous flow of cash, Italian states were afflicted with problems of monetary circulation which saw cash moving well in the towns but poorly in the countryside. It jingled in the purses of the middle and upper classes but hardly made a sound in the pockets of the poor. Worst of all was the unstemmed flow of precious metals from Europe to the East even as far as China. Venice, caught up in the insatiable need for luxuries, sent several million ducats to the Levant annually. Fostering barter deals was one way to help stabilize the overheated market, for her traders never became as adept as the English and Dutch in selling their

³²Ibid., 1: 452.

own or trans-shipped goods for hard cash.

One major casualty of inflation and the loss of specie was the private bank. Again, state power was the cure. In Venice, the answer was the Banco della Piazza di Rialto chartered in 1587.³³ Like the old private institutions, it issued "bank money" or drafts but its originality lay in the grant of major loans. To check inflation, a pledge was made to repay customers in the same specie deposited. Having investors put their cash into government securities or state banks did not signal a strong private sector but there is a danger here of forming anachronistic arguments over the merits of public and private investment, a modern concern. Although the Arsenal was by far the largest manufacturing operation in Venice, most families drew their livelihood from privately-held firms or small shops. The weight of financial mismanagement by the wealthy would press down on their shoulders first. But while the Republic was economically vulnerable, it still had advantages over rivals such as Florence or Genoa. These small powers, so similar to Venice in the production of luxuries, took full-face the onslaught of Spanish silver and paid for it with steep price rises. Undoubtedly, certain Venetian products were priced out of the

³³Lane, Venice: A Maritime Republic, 329-31.

world market; but that curse also hounded her Italian neighbors whose cost of living was higher.

The Serenissima was blessed by a stable if unimaginative administration, an adequate pool of skilled labor, and probably, better support from her own hinterland than those of her competitors. One important advantage was her class of enterprising entrepreneurs, many of whom were naturalized outsiders who earned the rights of permanent residents through their business acumen. This community was one of the few places where wages met the price rise, a socially just but economically risky policy which cut the sale of commodities like high quality woolen cloth.³⁴ About 1600, some of the skilled workers of the Arte della Lana or the cloth weavers guild were earning 144 ducats per year.³⁵ There was nothing typical in this as most artisans were making far less. Even though urban wage-rates were much higher than the rural, the two centers of power, the Arsenal and the Mint, both had reputations of paying poorly except in the most skilled categories. The great ship-building facility had about three thousand workers, the majority of whom were semi-skilled, making sixteen to twenty ducats for a 250-day year. They were impoverished. Lower middle class craftsmen, numbering in the

³⁴Braundel, Mediterranean, 1: 433.

³⁵Ibid., 1: 430.

thousands, were just making ends meet but were far better off than their English and German counterparts who lost about half of their purchasing power in the century 1520-1620.³⁶

The most serious human problem of the 1590s in the Mediterranean basin was the weather-related crop failure which necessitated massive relief measures. Even in the best of times, Venice was a magnet for the excess population of the contado or surrounding rural areas; but this normal flow was swelled to tragic proportions by the disaster. A vast variety of charitable enterprises sought to aid the victims; and it was only this and direct governmental action that staved off a catastrophe equal to the plague.³⁷ Poverty was a condition taken for granted but in such dire circumstances, could become acute enough to endanger the very existence of the community. Unlike the patchwork English version based on the Elizabethan Poor Law, Venice's philanthropy was well-organized in religious confraternities or Scuole, which also beat the drums in support of the state when the need arose. Processions and other long religious observances could be easily turned to political advantage; this method being used extensively during the Interdict battle with the Papacy. The terrible human

³⁶Lane, Venice: A Maritime Republic, 333.

³⁷Pullan, Rich and Poor, 355ff.

suffering of the famine, which the authorities handled surprisingly well, could only enhance the prestige of the government. It was one of the "mysteries" - plague, price, and population rises were others - that at least could be tackled in orderly fashion. In the massive changes of the previous century and a half, even keeping one's community on an even course was an achievement.

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When the English entered the Mediterranean in strength, the Venetians had hopes of restricting their activities; first by keeping the Levant traffic in native hands and then by making the capital the easternmost port of call for the outsiders. Through these devices, the Serenissima would resume her ancient position as the chief exchange point between two worlds. To bring this policy to fruition was the continuous task of Venetian ambassadors in Constantinople and envoys like Scaramelli, Molin and Giustinian in England. If English motives could be cast in a bad light, all the better. Scaramelli drew up a detailed history of the Levant Company and its involvement with Acerbo Velutelli's monopoly in currants and sweet wines, which resulted in such anger in the Senate that strong tax reprisals were taken. In 1602, foreigners were forbidden from lading the valuable fruit in Zante; their ships could not bring into Venice linen, cotton, wool or even thread from Alexandria, Cyprus, Syria or any Turkish port under pain of confiscation. "The object of these orders was to ruin English trade in the Levant..."³⁸

With some justification, London complained that no state had a right to act in such a manner outside time of war. They pointed out that the harbor of Zante was filled with ships

³⁸CSPV, 10: 79-81.

even as the decree was issued, causing a loss of goods to about fifty thousand ducats. Venetian ships in England - the few that were there - were treated somewhat differently, with eighteen months of grace granted before the curtain of restrictions fell. Scaramelli concluded: "If free trade is to be established, reciprocal and friendly steps must be taken."³⁹ Nothing seemed further away. Nicolo Molin, the resident ambassador in London, learned that part of Sir Henry Wotton's commission required him to complain about the ill-treatment English merchants received in Venetian jurisdictions, especially Zante.⁴⁰ But Molin felt that the complaints were mostly a blanket device to balance the just grievances against the English. To his mind, all the British wanted was an erasure of the past, thinking "that the execution of six or seven pirates and the restitution of seven or eight thousand crowns out of the hundreds of thousands they have stolen is satisfaction enough."⁴¹ Molin though, seems to have respected Wotton, describing him to the doge as a "gentleman of excellent condition - wise, prudent and able."⁴² And it was this fine reputation that Sir Henry carried with

³⁹Ibid., 10: 79-81.

⁴⁰Ibid., 10: 69.

⁴¹Ibid., 10: 170.

⁴²Ibid., 10: 168.

him to Venice.

On November 15, 1604, Wotton placed the case of the Levant merchants before the Collegio. This he did after meeting with his nation's business people residing in Venice. Like most men of his profession, he saw the trade problems dating back to 1580 stemming not from ill-will or greed, but from a lack of diplomatic give-and-take. Understandably, he wanted his countrymen to pay the same anchorage tax as other foreigners and, indeed, as that of the Venetians' own merchant ships. He also felt that they should have the right to hire out their own vessels in the Levant or in Italian ports and to be allowed to invest their capital freely. Wotton's concerns were not necessarily those of his master. While Sir Henry was arguing the merchants' case in Venice, James was working to line his pockets with some of their gold. He farmed out the currant tax, formerly in the hands of the Levant Company for £4,000, to the Lord Chamberlain, Thomas Howard, the Earl of Suffolk, for £5,500 per annum. But after a private meeting, it was restored to the merchants for the higher amount. James, of course, was interested in getting as much as possible out of the trade; and contrary to his image as a bungler, knew how to play off one group against another.⁴³

Just before Christmas 1604, Wotton requested that two

⁴³Ibid., 10: 191.

English sea captains, Roland Caitmort, master of the Lucky Elizabeth and John Pontois, captain of the Marita, be paid certain amounts due them. Pontois' case was considered the more serious as his freight was seized by the Savii alla Mercanta, the Venetian Board of Trade, on the petition of the Zaguri brothers. These two accused Pontois of stealing a cargo slated for loading on their ship at Tripoli in Syria.⁴⁴ Wotton pressed for equal treatment and complained of the Venetian attitude of brushing aside the king's requests. He protested that Molin and the state he represented were not treated with such disdain in England. Sir Henry, at this point at least, did not understand the approach: "I will grant you your request if you grant me mine."⁴⁵

A few days later, Wotton announced that Secretary John Herbert would deal with commercial relations between England and Venice at the London end. He did not realize then that they would hardly be dealt with at all. At the same audience, he came out against the seizure of two English vessels, saying that the authorities should have exercised greater care in distinguishing pirate from merchantman. He had already received assurances that the Caitmort and Pontois cases would be settled as quickly as possible. The Senate also thought

⁴⁴Ibid., 10: 200.

⁴⁵Ibid., 10: 205.

that free trade, which the English at least said they wanted, was a laudable goal but that outstanding issues had to be cleared up beforehand.⁴⁶ It seems that Sir Henry's hosts at this stage were still trying to size up this Kentishman as well as testing the waters of renewed relations with the crown.

Even apart from its phlegmatic nature, the Senate did not have to hurry a decision since the powers back in London were not overly concerned with soothing the Italians' feelings; and besides, time was on their side! The grievances remained. Ordinary customs were one-fifth higher for Venetian vessels than for those of the king's subjects; and the merchandise could be sold only to London dealers and then only in the capital. A tight time limit required the delivery of goods within six months of a signed order, otherwise they were required to pay double taxes and tithes; and all their wealth - if ventured - had to be invested in local enterprise since no one could take money out of the country.⁴⁷ The Venetians were not the only ones who were economically xenophobic.

In May, 1605, Wotton announced that James had agreed to a code of behavior for his country's ships in the Adriatic.

⁴⁶Ibid., 10: 321.

⁴⁷Ibid., 10: 216.

Upon meeting one of the state galleys, they were to strike their topsail and send their boat across the swells with official papers or be branded a pirate.⁴⁸ Many Britons considered this an affront even in Venetian waters. A portion of the Privy Council saw no need to give in so easily to demands especially to a power no longer master of the situation even in its own sphere. Salisbury, usually very careful in following the king's wishes, was not comfortable with these restrictions or with the idea of any sovereignty interfering with the movement of an English ship.

After delivering the king's word, Wotton brought up the matter of Nicolo Balbi, the accused murderer of English merchant Nicholas Pert. The doge, sliding in the direction of non-involvement, replied that a criminal case was the prerogative of the Council of Ten.⁴⁹ About a month later, he brought it up again on his sovereign's orders: "I am here now in the name of the King of Great Britain to demand civil and criminal justice against Signor Nicolo Balbi; civil today, for the criminal I will speak another day."⁵⁰ On the civil side, all personal effects, papers, clothes, plate, and three sums

⁴⁸Ibid., 10: 242.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., 10: 258.

of cash were to be accounted for, including a glaring 1500 thalers taken from Pert's strongbox. These charges could not be ignored, not even by the Venetian nobility; so a plan was set up to put Wotton at ease. A certain Lorenzo Zanoli, a merchant well acquainted with the English, was chosen by Balbi's friends to reason with Sir Henry. He even admitted that Balbi had Pert's money and papers. For a patrician to go to such lengths indicated that the ambassador must have had damning evidence. Balbi just wanted to restore the money and personal items secretly and have the matter of homicide evaporate. Anything could be arranged between gentlemen or so Balbi thought. Wotton did not explode with indignation but he did not take the bait either. Sir Henry wanted the entire matter aired in a public forum although he could not have been so naive as to believe that criminal charges would be placed against one of Balbi's rank.

Wotton appeared at the Collegio to hear the government's decision. The Council of Ten decided that restitution of some of Pert's funds and personal property would be sufficient. In no way would Balbi be brought up on criminal charges. Sir Henry was at his sarcastic best when he heard the verdict: "I understand that Signor Nicolo Balbi is absolved. I am glad...to report to my master that in the opinion of so grave a tribunal as the Council of Ten, Nicholas Pert died a natural

death."⁵¹ It was the king himself who pushed the case without realizing its complexities; he also did not have to stand up in an alien assembly and be accused of "villifying the Venetian nobility" as his ambassador was. Wotton was not joking when he remarked that he was glad that a decision, though unjust, was rendered. He delighted, he said, "much more in the dance, the festival, the comedy, than in tragic and terrible spectacles."⁵² But the ambassador did not resign from the case. Pursuing his prey, he asked the doge to take a hard look at the other aspects of the affair, especially the failure to restore the large amount of cash missing from Pert's strongbox. His determination paid off to his own satisfaction and presumably to that of the murdered man's heirs.

Criminal problems comprised only a small part of the ambassador's agenda. As three more ships from Britain sailed into port, he reminded his hosts that it was a priority matter to have the anchorage tax repealed. The rate, four and a half per cent on the cargo's value, was more a nuisance than a dire threat, but the tax was scheduled to be auctioned off to some of the villains of the age, the tax farmers. Sir Henry was pressured by his countrymen to do something before the

⁵¹Ibid., 10: 272.

⁵²Ibid., 10: 272.

impost left the Venetian government's hands; so he argued that it was unjust for England to be singled out for taxation that neither "the French, Spanish nor Flemish" paid. Any time Wotton wanted to emphasize a point, he cast himself in the king's shadow; in this instance, the tax was an insult to "our sovereign," since the crown required the Venetians to pay "only a ducatoon for anchorage."⁵³

Meanwhile, Nicolo Molin had a long session with Salisbury on various grievances, the envoy claiming that English opposition to Venetian maritime and commercial taxes came largely from ignorance of the issues involved. Wotton, he believed, had not done his homework and had lent an ear to one side only; the merchants "who in their own interests wish to grow rich the quicker and be relieved of all burdens."⁵⁴ Molin also reminded Cecil that his own people were dragging their feet in discussing the needs of Venetian merchants in England. Contrary to promises, no commissioners approached Molin to work out things equitably. Cecil admitted that this was true but thought that these problems would be more apt to be settled in Venice where Wotton could deal with both sides. Molin also wanted to put the matter of prejudicial taxation to rest; the English were not singled out, he maintained, as this

⁵³Ibid., 10: 278.

⁵⁴Ibid., 10: 284.

would be contrary even to Venetian interests.⁵⁵

Almost to the day, Wotton was heatedly arguing that farming out the anchorage tax was an insult to the king and silly besides, since the entire amount collected could not be more than five hundred ducats per year. Why should such a small sum compromise good relations between two friendly powers? Councillor Andrea Morisini shot back that Wotton's outburst had hurt and surprised the august assemblage. In arguing with so much passion, the ambassador had lost his sense of diplomatic balance. Such melodramatics had no place there.⁵⁶ Wotton turned pale from the rebuke. Swallowing hard, he admitted that the affair was not as serious as he made it out to be, so the session ended on an amicable note. In London, Molin, in speaking to James, got the impression that the king was not well informed as he expressed his concern for the rights of English merchants in Venice. In fact, James said plainly that he was "much occupied" (probably with hunting or theological discussions with his favorite clerics); and that it would be wise to speak to his secretary who was far better informed, since the king only knew what was told him.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Ibid., 10: 283-85.

⁵⁶Ibid., 10: 287-88.

⁵⁷Ibid., 10: 297.

Early in 1606, all official England, Wotton included, was concerned with the Gunpowder Plot, an attempt by dissatisfied Catholics to blow up most of the ruling class in one package. The Venetians, who did not need an upheaval in Britain, were relieved to see that James, his family, and the government escaped harm. Zorzi Giustinian, taking Molin's place as ambassador, got the official niceties out of the way and then met with Cecil who promptly brought up the question of burdens placed on English traders. The secretary, with all his honors - he was soon to be Earl of Salisbury - had his fragile constitution assaulted with the demands of office; his desk was never without some merchant's request to set the Venetian trade problem aright. After Giustinian politely replied that his countrymen had to go through much more in England, he assured Cecil that his government was working hard to remove all stumbling blocks to normal commerce.⁵⁸

Various plots, Irish, Spanish or otherwise, and the Papal Interdict overshadowed "minor" issues such as trade. It was only in late summer 1607 that Sir Henry came before the Collegio to bring up the question of the anchorage tax once again. The doge agreed that the question should be discussed freely, and indeed, discussion did flow with the government finally consenting to drop the burden, as they said, out "of

⁵⁸Ibid., 10: 320.

regard for his Majesty, in spite of many objections."⁵⁹ They fully expected that the pliable James would reciprocate by treating the Republic's vessels with the same consideration as those of France or Spain. Giustinian, upon receiving word from Venice, informed the London merchants and called on them to observe the regulations for their conduct in the Adriatic when encountering state galleys. Giustinian was an effective envoy who, as he said, was always trying to inspire confidence in the minds of English shipowners regarding the motives of Venetian officialdom.⁶⁰ What a thankless job he had!

Even though the Republic wished to be on cordial terms with the English, the duplicity of some of her servants kept it from being a fraternal relationship. Great Britain had a major grievance over the slippery dealings of the Venetian ambassador in Constantinople, who expended great effort to break up the northerners' trade in the Levant. What would this achieve? Wotton insisted that the large number of unemployed seamen would only aggravate the pirate menace, necessitating vast sums for new armaments. The doge would not admit that officials were out to handcuff English trade in the East in the hope that the capital would again be a major port

⁵⁹Ibid., 11: 37.

⁶⁰Ibid., 11: 48.

of call.⁶¹

English merchantmen chafed under the burden of proving honest intent not only because they were singled out among all flags but also because of the identification procedure could be dangerous to crew and vessel. The problem became so acute that Wotton delivered a formal memorandum of complaint in late April 1608. Commanders of galleys were unsatisfied unless the ship's captain reported in person. This, Sir Henry stated, was contrary "to the usage of the sea." Galleys would stand off at great distance firing, making it impossible to see whether the English were preparing the longboat for launching. As it was, the ship's boats were usually filled to the gunwales with cargo so the hour and a half response period was too short a time to get an officer over the water to the galley's deck. So ill-informed were the Italians about these newcomers that the St. George cross was thought to be a battle ensign rather than a plain means of national identification. Confronted by these complaints, the doge and council could only agree that there was room for improvement.⁶²

In August 1608, Marc Antonio Correr received his commission as ambassador to replace Giustinian. Regarding commercial relations, his instructions were little more than a

⁶¹Ibid., 11: 54.

⁶²Ibid., 11: 128.

replay of those given to Molin four years previously: do your best to sever the chains holding down our shipping. Although the English government was generally able to sidestep requests from foreigners, it could not ignore its own mercantile community. One such case involved a petition of the Levant Company asking for a lowering of the import duty on currants. James happily agreed, hoping that the Venetians would reciprocate to build up business on both sides. Some pressure also was put on him to raise the duty on Cretan wines but he refused, knowing that Britain, and not least his court were always short of this luxury.⁶³

A little later, Wotton bluntly asked that the Venetians lower their duties to show good will and plain business sense. The doge was wary, wanting to know James' real motives. Sir Henry gallantly replied that his master only wished to lower a rate set too high and to encourage an ally to the mutual benefit of both countries. Did Wotton think these people so gullible? In London, Correr found that the real reason was to please the tax farmers who had almost all of the traffic in their hands. It was also in the nature of a bone thrown to a pesky dog since the duty on almost everything had ballooned to a collective 400,000 crowns per year. Correr was also instructed to get as much information as possible on the many

⁶³Ibid., 11: 197-198.

ships entering the Thames estuary with currants smuggled from Venetian dependencies. From November 1608 to January 1609, thousands of pounds of the fruit were unloaded from fourteen bottoms, but suspiciously, only one of the vessels had originated in Venice itself.⁶⁴

This was the last commercial problem of consequence to be dealt with during Wotton's first tour of duty. Prosaic trade matters rarely hold a reader's attention but for all their drabness, they ranked first in importance in deciding Great Britain's ultimate triumph in the Mediterranean.

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⁶⁴Ibid., 11: 197-198

Closely allied to matters of trade was the anything but romantic pirate menace. By 1600, English buccaneers were in the vanguard of the criminal element in the Mediterranean. Not only was it a lucrative occupation for those on the scene but a tidy source of extra revenue for some of the most important people in England, including the Lord High Admiral. So strong was the ring of protection around these felons that James himself was reluctant to try to break it. He personally detested pirates but found that the thicket of interests was no easy thing to hack through.

On the one side, the king was besieged by the Venetian envoys demanding that he both execute the criminals and recover the loot; on the other, by persons in the highest reaches of the government who were loathe to see such practices end. James was agitated enough to intervene personally to obtain the conviction of a number of marauders, among them the infamous William Piers. Even then his exploits continued, for he was still hale and hearty after six of his compatriots met their doom. The king said that he would hang the judge if Piers did not go to the gallows; but even that threat did not put a rope around the pirate's neck.⁶⁵ Friends and enough bribe money kept the sentence from being carried out but perhaps even more important was the fear that

⁶⁵Ibid., 10: 100.

restitution of cash or goods would never be made unless the lives of important pirates were spared. The Venetians could not have corpses and a full purse too. Robert Cecil, no friend to thieves, was worn out with the complaints of Scaramelli and Molin, telling them to be satisfied that some justice was done. He also pointedly told them to stop pestering the king since the original policy of granting letters of marque - the training ground of pirates - was Elizabeth's, and much of the problem could be traced to the Spanish war now coming to an end.⁶⁶

Even before he set out for Venice, Wotton had to handle complaints about smuggling. "Everyone cheats" was his stock answer; in almost every merchant's breast beat a finagler's heart. As ambassador, Sir Henry could not afford to be so glib about a scourge that was eating away many a fortune. Opportunely, his employer had a genuine reputation for hostility to piracy, so Wotton could wrap himself in the royal cloak. He could point to the king's proclamation of 1603 that decreed death "not only for ship's captain and mariners, but for owners and victuallers of any man-of-war, which shall commit piracy..."⁶⁷ But the Venetians were not overly impressed with proclamations unenforceable in their own

⁶⁶Ibid., 10: 101.

⁶⁷Ibid., 10: 105.

waters. One official, Maffio Michiel of Zante, known as the "hanging governor," took it upon himself to be the equalizer. Four English mariners on the wrong side of the law, including the captain and owner of the Legion, Christopher Dollard, met their end at Michiel's hands. A direct strike at the governor was not in the cards but friends of the deceased did the next best thing; they plundered the Morisini, a vessel ironically commanded by an Englishman, Abraham Las, and carrying the personal goods of Michiel back to Venice. It did not take long for the complaints to reach Wotton's ears but he felt that his case against the governor was even stronger. Writing to Cecil, he was certain that English outrage was of a different quality, "laid not upon outlawed vagabonds but upon the very officers of this state."⁶⁸ As could be expected, there was a much higher level of tension attained on this issue than on disagreements over trade.

James' allowing of inspection of English vessels in the Adriatic took some of the logs off the fire as did the posting of security bond by those engaged in the Venetian trade. But one problem neither the king nor doge could handle was the specter of unemployment facing several thousand seamen from masters to deckhands. Privateers would not just take in their canvas because of a peace treaty with the Spanish enemy.

⁶⁸Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 322.

some, with genuine Protestant fervor, decided to continue strikes against Philip III, by flying flags of convenience, especially that of the Netherlands. More though, chose to establish themselves in North Africa, mostly at Tunis. Here was a real melting pot of infamy where renegade Englishmen, Dutch, French and some Italians could cruise side by side with their Turkish, Arab or Berber counterparts sailing under the crescent banner or none at all. Damage inflicted by these corsairs was considerable but perhaps even more galling to other Mediterranean states was the pirate "navy" being put together by Ferdinand of Tuscany.⁶⁹

Well padded with cash, the grand duke saw no reason why he should be deprived of further profits; and if this could be achieved by hiring or dragooning foreigners for his service, so much the better. At first, Wotton was relieved that English freebooters had made Livorno their new base for this put the onus of responsibility on Florentine shoulders. His interest was deeper still. Like many men of his position, Sir Henry was chronically short of cash. In his case, some of this was made up for by carrying out various services for Ferdinand. Coming from a former employer who had "introduced" him to James, these requests involved no loss of honor.⁷⁰

⁶⁹Tenenti, Piracy, 152-153.

⁷⁰Soon after arriving in Venice as ambassador, Wotton

Wotton was later to become thoroughly disenchanted with Ferdinand but before that he was involved in a very sensitive impressment case. The Merchant Royal, captained by Robert Thornton, was forced into the Tuscan fleet after calling at Livorno in a legitimate trading venture. Sir Henry protested vigorously in a letter to the grand duke since James' interest was likely to be involved. Pushed into action against the Turks, Thornton captured a galleon which in turn precipitated an international incident when an English ship was burned in retaliation in Constantinople harbor. Approaching Livorno, Thornton would not dock the Merchant Royal or his prize, keeping them just outside cannon shot. Naturally, the anxious Ferdinand had his secretary write Wotton to convey the idea to the sea captain that he would be safe nowhere outside the Tuscan service. For a fee, Wotton did this; and furthermore informed Salisbury that it would be hazardous to English trade interests in the Levant to grant Thornton refuge in England.⁷¹ After much bickering and proper payment sometime during 1606,

wrote to Ferdinand to say:

"I have never been able to doubt the goodness of your highness toward me; princes are born to do good to men of good will, of which I am one. Perhaps it would not be too much vanity in me to hope that on some occasion I might be of such service to your great name as an Anthony or a Thomas Sherley." Quoted in David W. Davies, Elizabethans Errant: The Strange Fortunes of Sir Thomas Sherley and His Three Sons (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 160.

⁷¹Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 333.

Thornton was persuaded to come to terms and stay in the grand duke's service. Ferdinand also was not interested in carrying matters to absurd lengths.

Generally Florentine flagships did not interfere with their Venetian opposites or approach the republic's territory, this on Ferdinand's direct orders. Upon his death, the order was reissued and for the most part, it was heeded. But English corsairs operating out of Livorno were not squeamish about attacking their own countrymen on the high seas. There was a particular reason for this: English ships carried munitions to the Turks. One of the original reasons Ferdinand encouraged freebooters was to build up his stocks of military hardware. Thus two aims were achieved in one foray: a drop-off of supplies in Turkish warehouses and arsenals and an increase in his own. Writing to Cecil, Wotton reported that the Florentine resident in Venice was boasting of his government's ability to throw its weight around. Sir Henry was appalled that vital material was leaving England, thinking it his duty "not to conceal from his Majesty so pernicious an exhaustion of his own estates."⁷² Wotton also could not have been unaware of James' inability to size up England's defense needs and act accordingly. The English Navy was already beginning to rot; and pirates would always benefit from this.

⁷²Ibid., 1: 408.

By far, the most important case of piracy Wotton had to deal with was that of Captain John Ward, who it seems, had the entire Venetian merchant fleet chained in fear.⁷³ Operating out of Tunis where he had built a grand marble palace, Ward was one of the best examples of his era of the poor sailor (in this case a fisherman) becoming a renowned commander through buccaneering - a veritable pirate admiral. His nerve was legendary. After capturing the Venetian merchant vessel Soderina e Reniera in the spring of 1607, he sailed it to his Tunisian lair where the cargo was sold to Turks and then resold to English merchants trading off the ship Husband. After the Venetian ambassador in London demanded restitution, the incredibly complicated affair fell to the courts, both admiralty and common law, where it still lay unresolved at Wotton's homecoming. "The greatest scoundrel that ever sailed from England" was Wotton's description of Ward but the Venetians were looking for more than words of comfort. Their exasperation at James' empty proclamations was joined to their own feelings of helplessness. If it was any comfort to his hosts, Sir Henry said that if Ward ever returned to England, the King would seize all his plunder and return it to the rightful owners. In the very remote chance of this happening, the Venetians were even amenable to the pirate's pardon in

⁷³For Ward's career, see DNB, 20: 777.

exchange for restitution. Wotton heard rumors that Ward had appealed to the king's mercy in exchange for the booty and a chance to die a natural death on his native soil; but even if this was true, there was some question whether the sovereign had the power to pardon someone for offenses committed against a foreign prince, in this instance, the signory of Venice.⁷⁴

Ward's horn of plenty was an attractive incentive to those in a position to forgive and forget, but James promised that nothing would be done to injure the pride of the old respected friendly power. There was a quick solution which the king naturally shrank from; paid assassination. Ward's head was worth a fortune if some adventurer could offer the right official an iron-clad proposal. Many of those cloak and dagger men promised Wotton that they could do away with the scourge and burn his ship to boot. One plan which Sir Henry thought serious enough to present to the Collegio involved a sea captain, a logical choice, who would require a ship fully equipped at the expense of the perennial victims, the Venetian merchants. If they were as bruised and battered as the story contended, the poor rich men should have jumped for joy at the chance to dispatch their tormentor; but he had nothing to fear from this class as his successful record showed.⁷⁵

⁷⁴CSPV, 11: 59.

⁷⁵Ibid., 11: 175.

If proclamations alone swept pirates from the seas, then James would have cut a remarkable figure; for in January 1608, another was handed down which vowed death and confiscation for any act of pillage at sea. Anyone tarred with the brush of suspicion was to be imprisoned without bail; shipowners of doubtful honesty were to pay caution money twice the value of their vessels. English merchants were not to sell guns, powder or any naval stores in North Africa. Like all harsh pronouncements, its effectiveness was a checkered one; the Venetians realistically reinforced it by promising a portion of all goods recovered to the commissioner overseeing the anti-pirate campaign, Vice Admiral John Rander. It worked marvelously as two of Ward's underlings, Longcastle and Taverner, were captured and arrested at Plymouth in March 1609.⁷⁶ As long as Ward's targets were foreigners, his activities roused little interest at home aside from those who held "stock" in his corporation; but soon after the jailing of his associates, word was received in London that two English vessels had fallen victim to the little red-faced fisherman in the Mediterranean.⁷⁷ Piracy at a distance was a romantic game but now it had struck close to home. Important public opinion hardened, resulting in a threatened dispatch of the few royal

⁷⁶Ibid., 11: 226.

⁷⁷Ibid., 11: 282.

warships into Italian waters. There is no doubt that Ward felt the heat as more coals were added to the fire. Not only were his own people outraged, but the Turks were also seeking his head as a renegade.

Only one place remained as a possible shelter: Livorno. Ward petitioned the grand duke for a place in his service but the terms offered were supposedly not profitable enough for either party. Opinion around Ferdinand was divided; some were disgusted with Ward's exploits; others wanted to use him against the Turks and see him blown out of the water at the same time.⁷⁸ His prestige was forever tarnished when a French raid on Tunis captured and burned twenty privateers attached to his service. Through some channel unknown to us, Ward petitioned James for pardon in exchange for L40,000 and all the stolen property in his possession; and was turned down.⁷⁹ The king was serious about pirates! And how many times was it said that the Stuarts could never be trusted to keep their word when a large sum of money was involved? Ward's day was nearly over. Late in 1609, Don Luis Fosciardo in the service of the viceroy of Naples, surprised Ward's ships at Goletta and destroyed them all in less than four hours without loss to himself. The buccaneer escaped for the time being but soon

⁷⁸Ibid., 11: 309.

⁷⁹Ibid., 11: 325.

rumors were flying that Ward was shipwrecked and drowned off Crete. Whether true or not, he never set foot on English deck or dry land again.

As British and Dutch sails increased in the Mediterranean, the western pirate menace tended to decrease. Heavily armed themselves, merchantmen were in no mood to lose increasingly valuable cargo to freebooters; they were becoming part of the "establishment" rather than remaining interlopers. And in this, Sir Henry could well acquiesce.

CHAPTER III

At his obsequious best, Sir Henry Wotton emphasized that he was but a creature of the king. But of what king? Was he the James of legend and popular imagination, a somewhat clownish genial sort who spent most of his time hunting or discussing theological matters with his bishops or was he the still trim young monarch whose appearance, if not overwhelming, was still suitably regal? This is not an idle question. The master Wotton served during his first tour of duty was not the unimpressive semi-senile ruler of his second and third missions to Venice but a shrewd, idealistic and very ambitious man.

Buoyed by the wealth of his comparatively well-governed new kingdom and freed from the near anarchy of his native country, James could play the champion of Protestantism and international peacemaker, a role which he cherished above all. Unfortunately, historians have performed a disservice in passing down a distorted version of James Stuart. His many eccentricities have been made the measure of the man as if he were the only ruler to exhibit behavior insufficiently modern.¹ For the last century or so, near worship of

¹From the venerable and thorough Samuel Rawson Gardiner to David Willson whose King James VI and I is the best of the post-World War II biographies, modern historians have generally disapproved of James' performance.

Elizabeth and her court has marked most scholarship of the period. Thus the Stuarts have suffered in comparison. Elizabethans, those unruly patrons of the Globe or denizens of wayside inns and taverns, were, contrary to the authorized version, more weary of the old queen's regime than her adulators are wont to admit. The glory of the Armada years had long since faded; the last decade of the reign being one of stagnation and outright privation for many. Although his nationality was despised by most Englishmen, James' Scots dialect made little difference, as the people's welcome for him was genuine and even enthusiastic. And this stranger, who was no friend of the common man, was genuinely touched by the outpouring of good will.²

Every ruler of the time tried to exude an aura of majesty which would set him off from the unanointed. With a man as unfamiliar with and fearful of the sword as James, this was a particular necessity. Like his French "cousin" Henry IV, the Scottish Solomon was easy in manner with underlings and often careless in appearance but there was no doubt that a line was drawn between ruler and ruled. One has only to observe so powerful a personage as the principal secretary, Robert Cecil, in his dealings with the king. As Earl of Salisbury, he was close to being a one-man government but still served at

²CSPV, 10: 510-11.

James' pleasure. Even further in the shadows was Wotton whose primary task was balancing the needs of England's interest abroad with his own need of staying in the royal favor. No king was more concerned with his position as God's deputy than James, and Wotton, a "prerogative man" if there ever was one, was not only a willing but an enthusiastic carrier of the Stuart banner to Italy. By inclination, Sir Henry was nonchalant about ceremony - "these fooleries" he called them - but he was exceedingly careful in maintaining proper dignity when the prestige of his sovereign was at stake. Wotton was proud of James' new title, assumed by proclamation, of King of Great Britain. It was to provide the centerpiece of his activities.³

To the few (from Izaak Walton to Pearsall Smith), who have noted Wotton's career, the Kentishman's personal quest of religious reform in Italy was an overriding consideration. It is undoubtedly true that the ambassador looked toward the spiritual rejuvenation of the Continent in the image of the English reformation. But however strong was his desire to extend reformed Christianity, his duty to maintain the dignity and strength of the crown in the person of the sovereign, was paramount. And James' inability, even with Salisbury's aid,

³C.H. McIlwain, ed., The Political Works of James I (Cambridge: The Harvard University Press, 1919), 271-3; CSPV, 10: 201.

to plot a reasonably straight course abroad never made Wotton's job an easy one. The diplomat's errors in timing and lack of good judgement when dealing with his hosts' religious traditionalism raised, without cause, hopes for reform and embarrassed both the Venetians and his own government. This can be explained in part by James' own naivete which was mirrored by Wotton. The king was overjoyed to find that the Venetians were anti-papal and he immediately associated their position with his own, the defense of sovereign rights against the encroachments of Rome. James had his information well filtered by his own diplomats and embellished by Protestant exiles, all seeking security or position or both.⁴

Wotton stood in the king's shadow like a knight on his master's chessboard. Each was a "public" Christian in contrast to the former queen whose real beliefs are still difficult to fathom. Sir Henry was serving a man of childlike faith whose love of theological discussion amounted to a passion. But James' theology was not disinterested. He was continually seeking references in Scripture and in the Church Fathers to bolster his claims to absolute kingship. Nothing pleased him more than the submissive attitude of the bishops and the assurance that indeed, he was the British Solomon. Being compared to the Emperor Constantine boosted his massive

⁴Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 77-85.

ego as well as giving sanction to his status as an anointed king chosen to guide God's people between the rocks of Roman superstition and Puritan rebellion. Theoretical as this might be, there was nothing doubtful about James' position as the crowned leader of Protestant Europe.⁵

Wotton, of course, was fully cognizant of James' role in European politics. Of all the envoys sent to the Continent during the reign, and this includes the very capable Dudley Carleton, Wotton was the most "European," supposedly able to fit in and handle very successfully every need of the Crown. But the business was flawed. Each man, king and servant, mistook fervor for well thought out policy and James' lack of, even fear of, military muscle compromised the work of all his ambassadors. None of them, not even the militant Sir Ralph Winwood so close to England at The Hague, could truly speak from strength. In their dreams, they saw thousands of well-trained troops backing up the king's occasional bluster but this was not the Hundred Years' War. Still, Wotton deluded himself as Cecil never would, in thinking that James would come to Venice's aid if the Republic were attacked by the Habsburgs or papal mercenaries. Perhaps it was his total lack of military experience that led him to such a conclusion.

⁵In his pamphlet, The Triumphs of King James (London, 1610), George Marcelline emphasized James' right to be characterized as a latter day Constantine.

Certainly his friendship with the king colored his mission and caused him to hope when such hope was unwarranted. Both were pedantically devoted to the English religious settlement, overwrought on the subject of the Jesuits and narrow-minded enough to entertain the possibility of the pope being anti-Christ.⁶

In spite of his sabre-rattling letters, Wotton was of pacific disposition, a trait reinforced by his experience with Essex in Ireland. His only significant departure from the path of peace was his temporary infatuation with the idea of a war to put an end to Spanish domination in Italy but this little wildness was soon caged by the king's natural timidity and Salisbury's fear for England's finances. To be sure, the Venetians, who should have known better, actually thought that James was serious when, in speaking to Ambassador Giustinian, he threatened to use force to block a possible invasion of the Republic's territory. One explanation for the misreading was that the Stuart ruler had only begun his long reign on English soil and that the Italians really had no experience of him at the helm of a significant power. Scotland was a cipher in international affairs, and as James VI in Edinburgh, the affable young ruler spent a great deal of time playing off one noble faction against another and trying to keep the

⁶Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 85-90.

presbyterian Kirk at bay. A further reason for James' ineptitude in using England's war-making potential as a diplomatic weapon was Scotland's humiliating vasselage to the Tudors. Even the "auld alliance" with France could not help an economically poor nation placed in a forlorn isolated spot in the mists of the north, not much better off than Iceland. Until the Reformation and the rise of literacy associated with it, Scotland remained in a technical sense a tribal, hence a barbaric, nation. James did not have the "feel" of a truly contemporary state until he came to England.

When Wotton went to Venice, he not only carried his own record but all of the backstage diplomacy that his sovereign had practiced during his reign in Edinburgh. In the last few years before Elizabeth's death, James was haunted by the spectre of losing the English throne. The old queen played the oracle, neither affirming nor denying that her cousin was to come into the inheritance. For his part, James tried every means, aboveboard and underhanded, to build up his credit in England and at foreign courts. His greatest impediment was not a faulty title but lack of resources both financial and diplomatic to play the role of a respected ruler. Long before he held sway as an unmitred archbishop and chief theologian of the Church of England, he was lecturing often hostile native divines who comprised his audience in Scotland. His position as arbiter of Christendom was still in embryo while greater

crowned heads lived.

It has often been noted by historians that James thought he had entered the Garden of Eden when he and his parasitic courtiers crossed the border into his new realm. Overlooked is the fact that he inherited not only a crown but a foreign policy or at least an orientation, that of extending protestantism and defending it anywhere it was threatened such as in the Netherlands. In addition, he took on a host of domestic problems, especially the Catholic presence which continued to grow. James was no fool. He knew that the papist community could be kept at rest with a few minor concessions combined with tax relief and it would build up his credit in Rome to boot. Important for Wotton's mission were James' efforts to ingratiate himself with the papacy. As usual, the king was both shifty and sincere at the same time. While it is extremely doubtful that he ever intended to become a Catholic like Henry IV, he was evidently truthful in calling Rome a flawed pearl but nevertheless still the mother church. So even though Wotton put his whole heart into the mission to break Roman power, James, for all his bluster, always had reservations. His straddling of the line blended with a natural avoidance of hard decisions made Wotton's efforts a pious academic exercise rather than a realistic scheme. And because of it, Britain's presence, although assuredly growing, did not become the overwhelming factor the breakdown in

Habsburg strength in the Mediterranean would indicate.⁷

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⁷One fear that James always harbored was that the pope would excommunicate him as an earlier pontiff had Elizabeth. Despite strained relations, this did not take place until the period of the Venetian Interdict when the English government was placing more onerous burdens on the shoulders of Catholics. See S.R. Gardiner, The History of England From the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War, 10 vols. (London, 1883-84), 1: 265-72.

One of the most mercurial and passionate expatriates with whom Wotton had to deal was Anthony Copley. In one letter written in 1592 to Queen Elizabeth by the merciless hunter of papists, Richard Topcliffe, Copley was described as "the most desperate youth that liveth." Certainly, violence was no stranger to this temperamental young Elizabethan as he had already shot a "gentleman" and had thrown his dagger at a parish clerk within the precincts of Horsham church. Topcliffe was probably not too far off the mark when he wrote that "there liveth not the like, I think in England, for sudden attempts, nor one upon whom I have good grounds to have watchful eyes."⁸ Copley was imprisoned several times late in the reign but ironically, the few things that survive from his writings are full of effusive praise for the queen.

Copley came from a well-known Catholic gentry family which unlike many others of that class had not made peace with the status quo. His father, Sir Thomas, had probably been jailed in the 1560s and had gone permanently into exile in Spanish Flanders in 1570 just three years after his son's birth. Barely out of his teens, the younger Copley went over to the same battleground in Philip II's forces and

⁸John Strype, ed., Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion and Other Various Occurrences in the Church of England During Queen Elizabeth's Happy Reign Together with an Appendix of Original Papers of State, Records and Letters, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1824) 4: 186.

unfortunately for the novice soldier, was away from his native soil precisely at the time of the Armada's attack. Dissatisfied with serving his country's enemies, he returned home, was soon arrested and placed in the Tower of London. In a discourse to his jailer, the Lieutenant of the establishment, he did not try to justify his act of going abroad. Instead, he craved pardon saying that he grieved to hear of Spanish preparations in the wake of the Armada.⁹ Evidently his sincerity or outside influence freed him and he returned to his home to commit the violent acts already described. If this were all, Copley's story would not be too different from other volatile young men of his class who had won their spurs abroad. But his character had some substance.

A devout Catholic, Copley belonged to a group called the Appellants who prided themselves on their spiritual adherence to Rome but nevertheless paraded their Englishness to the point that they would loyally fight any invaders of their country even if they were flying papal banners. Obviously this was not displeasing to the government that both feared the growth of the Catholic community and its ability to convert those of high social position. Perhaps the Appellants' dislikes or hatreds are a more accurate measure of their behavior. They despised both the Spanish and the

⁹Ibid., 4: 12-14.

Jesuits whom they inaccurately saw as working hand in glove. And this bitterness toward the society was to have very interesting consequences for Copley and for Wotton.

Copley's short works written toward the very end of Elizabeth's reign are good examples of the venomous tracts that divided a community which itself was always on the edge of persecution. In An Answere to a Letter of a Jesuited Gentleman by His Cousin, Maister A.C., Copley poured vitriol on those "fathers" who had greatly extended their influence even though they numbered less than twenty at this time. It is curious and informative that his prose resembles Wotton's so closely on the order: "...better it were they were all as far as India from us, there to take their fortunes."¹⁰ To Copley's "party," English Catholics who supported the Jesuits were tainted by their association. As Copley said, "true Catholic and English loyalty" rested on respect for the Crown, that a meaningful toleration could be achieved if the wiles of the foreigners could be exposed and crushed. One of the main arguments of those opposing the Jesuits was their sponsorship of assassination and violent overthrow of governments not in line with their militant outlook. Hardly a year passed when a report (Wotton's among them) would arrive in London from the

¹⁰Anthony Copley, An Answere to a Letter of a Jesuited Gentleman by His Cousin, Maister A.C., English Recusant Literature vol. 13 (York: Scolar Press, 1970), 113.

Continent citing a plan to kill the queen and later, James. Copley was much concerned with the seditious nature of Jesuit planning such as that of Father Robert Parsons about whom more will be said. He wondered how "such a society of men after so many scandals and foul deserts (sic) of theirs in France and elsewhere for Prince-killing, sedition, etc. can be thus of credit in England."¹¹ This line of reasoning comes from Copley's second pamphlet entitled Another Letter of Mr. A.C. to his Disjesuited Kinsman. Evidently, he had convinced his cousin that the Jesuits were not to be trusted.

Another issue which concerned all loyal thinking Englishmen was that a non-Briton who would necessarily be a Catholic would obtain the crown on Elizabeth's death. Copley, with his bitter anti-Hispanic attitude like Wotton's, poured his patriotism from a full pitcher. With the Spanish Infanta or any of her ilk on the throne, England would cease "her monarchic-honour" and "to become a vassal to Spain or any other nation be it by title or conquest or whatsoever pretense, yea of religion; oh how dishonourable and abominable were it to true English nature and valour, and scandalous to all the world."¹² But this does not mean that Copley was

¹¹Anthony Copley, Another Letter of Mr. A.C. to His Disjesuited Kinsman, English Recusant Literature vol. 100 (York: Scolar Press, 1972), 71.

¹²Copley, An Answere, 47-48.

resigned to seeing James VI of Scotland succeed Elizabeth. soon after James had settled in, Copley was uneasily involved in a plot to place the king's cousin, the Lady Arabella Stuart, on the throne. The affair, called Watson's Plot (after a mentally unbalanced priest, William Watson), Copley correctly saw as a fiasco and caused a one hundred eighty degree turnabout in his opinions. He decided to put his hatred aside and indirectly, to put the matter in the hands of the Jesuits. Actually, he was behind in this as the society already had wind of the wild plan. Copley had written to George Blackwell, the archpriest and nominal head of the secular clergy in England, to ask his advice and had told his sister that he had written such a letter. Father Henry Garnet, the superior of the English Jesuits and future martyr, soon had the information. The Jesuits did not have to notify the government for Blackwell acted quickly, putting himself, and temporarily the Catholic community, in James' good graces.

With the two secular priests, William Watson and William Clark, Copley was found guilty of treason and condemned to death but was pardoned and banished from the country in August 1604. Formerly, it was thought that he simply slipped into obscurity on the Continent to reappear briefly at the English College in Rome in 1606 or 1607 and then to die. But according to Father Antonio Possevino, Copley was in Rome soon after his banishment, there to make contact with English

Jesuits with whom he had carried on his pamphlet war. He then travelled to Naples to be reconciled with his major adversary, Robert Parsons, who was residing in Naples out of favor with pope Clement VIII. In Rome, it was also decided that he should go to Venice to confer with the newly appointed English ambassador. The Jesuits were most concerned to allay fears that they were plotting to overthrow James' government. In these months before the revelation of the Gunpowder Plot, there was still some hope for toleration.¹³

After settling his differences with Parsons, Copley's main task was to convince the Crown in the person of the ambassador that this particular Jesuit was not the threat that he had been made out to be. In a long letter to Wotton, Copley stated Parson's case, including his denial of having tried to interfere with the Stuart succession to the throne or of vilifying the English nobility.¹⁴ In Naples, Copley also had met with other English Jesuits who were effusive in their praise of James, insistent in their loyalty and devotion to his person. They attributed their dark reputation to detractors and liars who were trying to destroy the natural relationship between monarch and loving subjects. The letter

¹³Antonio Possevino, Relatione delle cose passate in Venetia coll' amb. del re d'Inghilterra printed in Aevum 7 (1933): 396.

¹⁴Anthony Copley, Letter to Wotton March 2, 1605, printed in Aevum 7 (1933): 415.

was as much an apology for Copley as for Parsons. He was still a young man, had hopes for his co-religionists in England and rated his chances as good that some day he could return to his homeland. Although Wotton received him courteously, his plea for the Jesuit evidently made no impression for the ambassador continued to refer to Parsons in unflattering terms in his letters to Cecil, "vile creature" being characteristic.

As for Copley, he surfaced briefly in both Paris and Rome, remaining on solid ground with the order with which he had been reconciled. On the accession of Paul V to the throne of Peter, Parsons was again able to return to Rome to assume his duties as rector of the English College where he served until his death in 1610.

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Wotton's dealings with his own countrymen took up a sizeable part of his time. His public pronouncements in behalf of English merchants have already been considered. For the Crown interest, these seemingly mundane activities were, of course, the most important facets of his mission, for they helped to solidify the hold of the northern nations on Mediterranean trade and provided the groundwork for the great expansion of British power in that theater during the eighteenth century. Wotton though, seems to have enjoyed the role of master of intrigue especially with regard to Catholic exiles like Anthony Copley. This was nothing unusual in Italy for major figures, envoys or not, usually employed paid spies or even hired street toughs called bravi. Wotton denied that he ever resorted to using violence against opponents and this is probably true as his temperament was as averse to personal aggression as it was opposed to public declarations of war to gain specific ends such as the breaking of papal influence over independent Italian states.

One thing that makes Wotton's activities more interesting than those of his fellow diplomats was his status in Italy as the only resident envoy from a Protestant state, this distinction remaining in force until the arrival of the Dutch after the truce with Spain in 1609. Those Catholic exiles from Britain and Ireland who continued to circulate on the peninsula raising the hackles on Wotton's neck in different

degrees for their devotion to their own cause ranged from fanatical to lukewarm. The ambassador's well-publicized antipathy to both the Jesuits and the Vatican (and this was genuine) should not dissuade us from looking beyond a public stance which was a required ritual for any English envoy.

Wotton's personal encounters were rare but one, that with Antonio Possevino, strikes an observer as a surer indicator of the Kentishman's attitude than the flaming rhetoric of his reports to Cecil or the king. But Possevino was no stereotyped Tridentine cleric. Besides being a model priest, he was a cultured man, an accomplished linguist and diplomat, having served in such diverse places as Sweden, Russia, Poland and Lithuania as well as numerous posts in western Europe. More than a generation older than Wotton, Possevino, with his mild scholarly demeanor, had a natural ease of conversation which the ambassador always responded to for he himself was a master of relaxed talk. Without a doubt, the Jesuit made contact with him in friendship and good faith but also to find out the extent of Protestant proselytizing activities at the embassy and to counteract the spread of heretical books and ideas. Of particular concern was the English influence at the University of Padua which was within Venetian territory.¹⁵

¹⁵Possevino mentions that an English rector of studies was appointed and this caused a major scandal not only with most of the Italians but with foreigners as well. Even though a Catholic, the rector was accused of sowing discord. Antonio

Possevino had known Wotton when the young Englishman was visiting Italy for the first time and considered him one of his "lambs," a potential convert. The French ambassador, phillipe de Fresne-Canaye, with whom Wotton had numerous animated theological discussions, was a former French Huguenot brought over in part to Rome through the persuasive arguments of Possevino. Malicious tongues, though, claimed that his conversion was political and that the ambassadorship was a gift from Henry IV for shedding his old faith. Possevino utilized the Frenchman and a local lawyer as intermediaries before actually meeting face-to-face with Wotton since Sir Henry's position was now something more than that of the wandering scholar. The papal nuncio encouraged the Jesuit in his dealings with Wotton but the latter refused to have any discussions within the embassy itself. Instead, they were to meet secretly in the Dominican church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo under the pretext of studying the artwork. Cordial the meetings were, but if anything, Wotton's anti-Romanism was more ingrained than ever. He was working unceasingly to foment a break between Venice and Rome and blaming much of the Republic's problems on the Jesuits! Possevino did not give up but clearly saw the magnitude of the problem.

Onto the scene now arrived a very curious individual,

Possevino, Relatione delle Cosa Passate in Venetia coll' Amb. Re d'Inghilterra, printed in Aevum 7(1933): 394.

almost a caricature of an English priest in exile, a canon of the cathedral in Vicenza named John Thornhill. He was both illusive and ever-present, meeting travellers of his own nationality in different cities of northern Italy and was thus reported in government circles as a dangerous associate of both Jesuits and Spaniards. In Bologna, he appeared under the guise of a friar to some; to others under his true title, Dr. Thornhill. Aurelian Townshend, the poet, encountered the cleric in Bologna and was taken under his wing. They travelled together to Florence, lodged in the same quarters and then went on to Vicenza, the canon emphasizing that he wanted to return home, if he could have the protection of Robert Cecil.¹⁶ Having an exaggerated sense of his own importance, Thornhill believed that he could be an effective intermediary between King James and the pope, encouraging toleration for English Catholics to live and worship in peace.

Thornhill claimed that he had papers originally sent from the highest places in England to Rome which in turn he had received from Cardinal Bellarmine. The gist of these was that James wanted a trustworthy Catholic to act as an intermediary between himself and the papacy. One question that immediately arises is how the government could trust a man it had already labeled a dangerous figure? Was he more to be used than

¹⁶Sir Edmund Chambers, Aurelian Townshend (London: Macmillan, 1912), 13, 43-44.

employed? After arriving in Venice, he seems to have been encouraged by Wotton, a distant relative of his, to pursue this goal. Thornhill did not want to be the principal actor in this affair but nevertheless wished to be an emissary to help his co-religionists. James had deep doubts about the loyalty of his Catholic subjects and an effective pleader could make a difference.

Possevino urged Thornhill to be cautious, to take the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius for a month before undertaking anything so serious. This he did. In March 1605, he was in London residing with the Venetian ambassador, Nicolo Molin.¹⁷ Although not meeting with James, he was able to speak to Salisbury but to what end is unknown. One thing is certain; Robert Cecil was no friend to Catholics. Several months later, Thornhill was back in Venice living at the English embassy seemingly comfortable in establishment circles. He was boasting that he had full credentials to deal with both parties to insure good relations between London and Rome and to help heal the rift between the Crown and its Catholic subjects.¹⁸ Now his mission can only be seen as a colorful sidelight to the cat and mouse game played between the two antagonists.

¹⁷CSPV, 10: 227.

¹⁸Ibid., 10: 306.

In a letter to Possevino, Sir Henry expresses admiration and respect for the man and thanked him for his kind words about King James but did not think him typical of his order which in Wotton's view was a vile group.¹⁹ Circumstances conspired to harden the ambassador's opinion. The Gunpowder plot and the Venetian Interdict, neither one of which directly implicated the Ignatians, occurred in the space of less than a year and joined with existing prejudices, overwhelmed the humane approach that Wotton ordinarily prided himself on. It is often a feature of modern ideological warfare to strip one's enemies of the capacity to act decently or to behave from any but the basest motives. This unfortunately is the attitude that seized the English ambassador.

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¹⁹Jesuit Archives Rome, OPP NN 333 F. 214r

Late in 1605, Wotton received word from Spain that his nephew, Pickering, had died, which in itself was cause for sorrow but even more so because the young man had left this life a Roman Catholic. The Jesuits, for whom Wotton had cultivated a loathing, now had struck into the very heart of his family, and to the middle-aged man without sons of his own, their very name filled him with revulsion. In practical terms, the news that one so close had left the Church of England for Rome could not have been welcome. As his previous experience with Elizabeth had shown, it was a simple thing to fall from royal grace, and now as ambassador, he had far more to lose than as a wandering scholar. Thus Wotton entered the new year much more determined to exploit the differences that were already developing between Venice and the newly elected pontiff, Paul V.

The new pope, an excellent priest and experienced canonist, was nevertheless ill-suited to deal with such a problem-child as the Serene Republic. Whereas his calm predecessor, Clement VIII, had allowed certain outstanding issues to remain dormant, Paul was of a temperament to push things to their logical conclusion. Adding fuel to the already smoldering mass, a new doge, Leonardo Dona, had just been elected to the most prestigious office which in theory was largely ceremonial post, but in the hands of a strong experienced individual, could become a source of real power.

dona not only had the reputation of being a devoted patriot but also of being the lion of opposition to all things Roman. Years of duty as the Venetian ambassador to the Holy See had only sharpened his existing biases.²⁰

The Papal States and Venice were the two major sovereign states on the peninsula. In the controversy over the Interdict, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that there was an automatic political rivalry present no matter how good-willed the two rivals might be. It is inaccurate to depict Venice as some sort of neo-classical pagan city-state or as a crypto-Protestant hotbed. She was the first polity to support openly the decrees of the Council of Trent and in spite of Wotton's jibes about superstition and saint-worship, the task of reform was moving ahead. Without a doubt, it was political and legal considerations confused with the spiritual that caused Paul V to come down so hard on the Republic. What was even more difficult to understand was the transformation of the quiet scholarly Cardinal Borghese into a minor edition of Gregory VII or Innocent III. Remarkably, an old Italy "hand" like Wotton was caught unawares. After Paul's election, the envoy wrote to Salisbury that the new pontiff "was a creature of Clement VIII, so by the present probabilities, he is likely

²⁰Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 330.

to prove an imitation of him."²¹

As the sovereign lord of most of central Italy, the pope found himself in boundary disputes with Venice particularly after the recent inclusion of Ferrara in the Papal States. As a measure of national defense, the Republic had decided to alter the course of the Po by constructing a canal; this did little to encourage friendly relations. Unless accompanied by armed guards, Venetian fishing boats were often seized by the papal legate in Ferrara. In retaliation, citizens of that jurisdiction were taken into custody when the occasion presented itself. These irritations were inflamed with Paul's accession. Even before moving against Venetian interests, the Pontiff excommunicated the president of the royal council in Naples for having sentenced a cleric to the galleys and for having ignored the warnings of Clement VIII on the same matter. As French Cardinal du Perron purred with satisfaction, this outraged the Spaniards who had already endured long years of pro-Bourbon and anti-Habsburg popes.

Moving to teach the Venetians proper respect, Paul laid secular claim to Ceneda in the Veneto over which the Republic had exercised sovereignty for centuries without any hint of displeasure from Rome. Despite this assertion of territorial

²¹Paul owed his election to a split in the College of Cardinals. The pontiff believed that he had a divine mission to extend the immunities and liberties of the Church. See Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 333.

prerogatives, disputes over the rights, privileges and exemptions of the clergy in the Venetian domain were the area of contention over which normally rational men could not bring themselves to admit the good faith of the other party. As mentioned, Venice was the first state to adhere to the decrees of Trent but since that time had seemed to deliberately harass the clergy as a group because of the abuses of some. In today's militantly secular world, the actions of the Venetian oligarchy seem praiseworthy just as the bloody excesses of some modern revolutions are excused in the name of abstract rights. But Venice was always pleading its case of republican liberties before the court of history and yet tried to deny a fair hearing to the Church. By the accepted usage, the prescriptive rights long acknowledged in Western Christendom, the clergy had privileges and duties which separated them from other subjects, and in this regard, the pope was standing on firmer ground than his adversaries.

In a practical sense, Venice had a right to benign neglect since she provided a counterweight to the great powers who considered Italy as nothing more than a fief. On the count of peninsular patriotism alone, this Borghese pope should have used the gentler hand of his Aldobrandini predecessor. But Paul issued a bull prohibiting the alienation of ecclesiastical property by sale or gift. The immediate cause of the break was the renewal by the Senate of two laws passed

during the fifteenth century forbidding the transference of real property to the Church and the further erection of ecclesiastical buildings -even hospitals - without the permission of the government. In December, 1605, the pope demanded the annulment of the laws and the surrender of two notorious criminals, Brandolin and Saraceni, to the ecclesiastical courts for trial as they both held clerical status. The new patriarch, Vendramin, was forbidden to proceed to Rome for examination and confirmation under the excuse that the cost was prohibitive. But all was not provocation. With regard to the criminous clerics, the doge hinted to the nuncio that a polite letter asking for their release to the ecclesiastical courts for the sake of expediency and good will would certainly be honored. But Paul was in no mood to be placated. On December 10, 1605, two briefs on the mortmain laws and criminous clerics were issued. If this were not enough, the letters arrived on Christmas Eve and the bumbling nuncio, partly out of timidity, left them in the Council chamber while every one of position was at Mass. And to complete the callous indifference, all this took place while the Doge Grimani lay dying.

The state, standing by its case, said that the matter was purely secular in nature. Fra Paolo Sarpi, chosen by the Government to present its side of the story, argued that these were rights granted by former pontiffs. Pope Paul replied

that these could never be more than of a temporary nature and that he, as the successor of St. Peter, could suspend them at will. In mid-April 1606, he issued a bull of interdict and excommunication; Venice had twenty-four days to put its house in order. Rome might not have been so quick with the savage pen if it realized how pugnacious a mood the Signory was in. The Venetians felt that they had made a sincere effort to come to an agreement and had received nothing but scorn in return. An edict was issued declaring the bull null and void and forbidding its posting anywhere in the dominion.²² Clerics, who were singled out for close observation, were ordered to carry out their spiritual duties as usual; and for the most part, in true patriotic fashion they complied. But there were important exceptions especially in the context of international relations. Jesuits, Theatines and Capuchins, those orders most imbued with the reform spirit of Trent, would not comply. By far the most formidable, the Jesuits were expelled, complicating an already overheated situation with the great powers in Italy.

For his part, Wotton was well satisfied with the proceedings. At first, he had spent his time sulking in his

²²Dona's public notice: "...It is our firm resolution always to live, like our predecessors from the foundation of this City, in the holy and apostolic Catholic Faith, under the guidance of the Holy Roman See..." Quoted in James Brodrick, St. Robert Bellarmine, Saint and Scholar (London: Burns and Oates, 1963), 254.

residence because the Venetians would not agree to lift the anchorage fee on English shipping and so he felt the embassy to be a waste of the king's time and money. By the petty means of refusing to accept callers or to request an audience, he hoped to make the point that English good will was essential to Venice if a successful defense was to be made against the papacy. Even before Paul issued the bull, Wotton met secretly with the Secretary of the Collegio, Giovanni Carlo Scaramelli, complaining that he was not taken into their confidence to a sufficient degree. He assured Scaramelli that it would be to his government's advantage to work with him as the English had reliable spies "in the very penetralia of the Papal Court." With good reason, Wotton took great care to maintain the secrecy of his movements, meeting only a single Venetian at a time so that if confidence was betrayed, he could deny that he ever said anything that could be held against him.²³

Wotton was sick a great deal of the time that spring and only half-jokingly wrote Salisbury that even if he never rose from his bed again, it would be a great comfort to his soul "to have lived to see a Pope notoriously despised by a neighboring State."²⁴ If he was happy over the pontiff's

²³CSPV, 10: 334.

²⁴Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 346.

discomfort, his steps were even lighter and more lively over the plight of the Jesuits who were treated with true vindictiveness on the part of the authorities. Even Wotton uneasily noted the "notorious circumstances" that the society was not allowed to take any of its movables across the border, which cruelty made the entire province a troop of beggars needing shelter in their order's houses in neighboring states. Before the departure, one of their superiors, Giovanni Barone, met privately with the new doge, Dona, offering the society's help in mediating the dispute with the papacy. Dona told him that his order had interfered in politics too much already; that this was the prime reason for their ouster.²⁵

Problems for the Jesuits at this juncture were an enormous coup for the English interest in northern Italy, as debris from the Gunpowder Plot was still descending on the European diplomatic scene. James, ably assisted by the anti-Catholic Salisbury, was trying to convince everyone within earshot that the Jesuits were behind the plan to destroy him and Parliament in one conflagration. Except for a gullible few, the charges had not stuck abroad, even in Protestant lands. Wotton was plainly worried that Jesuit apologetics circulating all over Italy protesting the order's innocence would compromise the king's cause. Salisbury had informed him that Father Henry

²⁵Ibid., 1: 347.

Garnet, the provincial of the English Jesuits, had been found guilty of treason, a verdict that could be used with profit by an envoy starved for ammunition against his surest adversary. Wotton was also able to justify the severe penal laws directed against the society in his homeland for their alleged interference in the internal affairs of Venice. It is interesting to speculate how far Wotton would have gone to secure his country's interest if such a plan had never entered the minds of the conspirators. As it was, the transparent case against the hapless defendants was greeted with much skepticism as the pieces simply fitted too well!²⁶

For the first few months after the Interdict was proclaimed, Wotton worked with all his guile and intellectual strength to make the break with Rome permanent.²⁷ Ordinarily, this is used as an illustration of his elaborate plan to introduce Protestantism in Venice. What is most apparent is the lack of any plan; a long-range hope possibly but

²⁶Ibid., 1: 347-48.

²⁷Wotton, who had taken a three-day holiday in the Padevano to recover his health, admitted to the doge that it was a beautiful region but said "...I am told that a third of it, the best, is owned by the Church and they are not content even yet. I must tell your Serenity a really marvelous fact. At the time we English were still Catholic in the reign of Edward III, a law was passed precisely similar to the law of Your Serenity forbidding the accumulation of temporal goods in ecclesiastical hands. No complaint from Rome occurred down to the time of Henry VIII. Strange that Paul should make such a noise." See CSPV, 10: 348.

certainly no blueprint. Even his hopes were given little encouragement as the government insisted on the strictly Catholic character of Venetian society. On the contrary, the main weapon in the Republic's arsenal was not the threat to follow Luther or Calvin but to accuse the papacy of politicizing the Faith and attacking the liberties of a traditionalist Catholic state. It was this stance that the Venetians continually put forward in diplomatic circles, the mark of a government long on intrigue and short on alliances and military punch.

Wotton appeared frequently before the doge and the Collegio to display his true devotion to the ancient polity, melodramatically insisting that he be considered a Venetian citizen. He must have been a novel sight to those hardened politicians with his frank and sincere offer of service to his adopted home. If Wotton ever had a warlike period in his life, it was during the summer months of 1606 when it looked like all European eyes were centered on Italy. He proposed a secret defensive league made up of Britain, France, the Grisons, a few Swiss cantons and perhaps a German prince or two. Again, such a starry-eyed lumping together of such varied elements does not show a realistic frame of mind. To build up a thirst for action, he wheeled out the exhibit marked "the threat of Spanish attack." He was anxious to show

that Madrid was working closely with Rome on all moves which it certainly was not. Count Fuentes in Milan, as he put it, was delighted with the Interdict. The Jesuits, he informed the doge, were trying to have Philip III style himself "Defender of the Faith" instead of "Catholic King," hoping to bind that monarch closer to Rome.²⁸ This would have been quite a feat since the Jesuits were not in favor in Spain and it was certain that the Venetians knew this.

Wotton's efforts to light the fires of conflict did not go unnoticed in Rome where his activism was taken seriously. Even before the Interdict took effect, Wotton told the secretary, Scaramelli, that the nuncio was writing the Vatican that the ambassador had offered the rebels all the aid and comfort that the Crown could muster.²⁹ Wotton insisted that the pope's representative had fabricated the entire story, that he had said no such thing in James' name. It should not have surprised him that others were twisting his words and actions either venomously or in bewilderment. He was notorious for exceeding his instructions and it is not unlikely that the king merely sent cordial regards which were blown all out of shape by the eager diplomat. In mid-June, 1606, when things were starting to come to a boil, he informed

²⁸CSPV. 10: 349.

²⁹Ibid., 10: 335.

the doge that the papacy was thinking of taking direct action against his activities. There is nothing surprising in Rome taking umbrage at this heretic's swagger but what is peculiar is that an unidentified friend of Wotton requested full information on the charge of aiding the Venetians against the papacy. Someone was vitally interested in clearing the Kentishman's name in the halls of papal power. His answer was that he had no need to clear his reputation in Rome, for he was not dependent on her.³⁰ On the face of it, this was the proper answer for an English ambassador, a Protestant, to make. But why was he so insistent on bringing this out in public? It shows that Wotton did not just have friends, informants or spies in the Eternal City, but Catholics who were close enough to him to be vitally concerned with his reputation.

Why should English Catholics in Rome, whose brethren were suffering in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot, be so solicitous of a man who was James' alter ego and who was doing his utmost to undermine their religion even in Italy? Obviously, there were old loyalties and friendships that crossed religious lines and Wotton was a man who kept up with his friends even if they were papists. But the ambassador was also a performer and at this point, was determined to play the anti-papal role

³⁰Ibid., 10: 356.

to the hilt. Another motive not immediately apparent was his desire to maintain his credibility at home. All diplomats were to some extent in a fishbowl and Wotton was in the middle of a controversy of European dimensions. Whatever he said or did in Venice would invariably become a topic of conversation in governing circles in London where malicious tongues were seeking to undercut his position.³¹ The deathbed conversion of his nephew in Spain could not have helped his reputation; the Catholicism of his brother, Lord Edward, did not become public knowledge until the 1620s although it was certainly known both in Rome and Madrid and possibly by James himself.³² If Wotton actually got wind of his brother's conversion, he would undoubtedly have kept the fact to himself and his shrill denunciations of the pope and the Jesuits would be an even more effective shield against discovery. What his fellow diplomats saw as flamboyant and erratic behavior was carefully orchestrated and not the rantings of some flaming preacher. This is not to say that Wotton was not sincere in his

³¹Wotton was still carrying around the burden of having worked for Essex. Although of no consequence to James, this could provoke continued opposition from others. In addition, he was the possessor of a public office and the king's favor, two of the most precious commodities a man of his background could have. Two practitioners adept at this cruel art were Sir Dudley Carleton, who was to succeed him at Venice and the Priggish gossip, John Chamberlain, a prolific letter-writer.

³²See Albert J. Loomie, "A Jacobean Crypto-Catholic: Lord Wotton," Catholic Historical Review, 53 (1967), 328-345.

religion; only that his private faith was akin to that of Erasmus, in other words, not very well defined in doctrine. His public face was something other.

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In London, James was in a militant mood. In a conversation with the Venetian ambassador, he praised the Republic's laws that hastened the conflict with the Papacy. He was of the opinion that overmighty popes had been able to build up their temporal strength not through Christ's will but by exploiting the differences among rulers. James appeared petulant when he said that the pontiff held him in little regard and that his crown was "the most abominable thing in the world." But he claimed to be "a better servant of God" than Paul.³³ There is no doubt though, that the king was trying to keep the lines of communication between himself and the Holy See. He was still desirous of convoking an ecumenical council and told Ambassador Giustinian that he had written Henry IV to that effect, thinking that the Interdict crisis might have been a providential act designed to awaken men to the scandal of disunion. Giustinian knew how to pour balm on the king's wounded pride by implying that James' intentions were certainly misconstrued by Rome. Venice's rough handling of the Jesuits brought out this gem of invective from the monarch: "O blessed and wise Republic, how well she knows the way to preserve her liberty, for the Jesuits are the worst and most seditious fellows in the world.

³³Ibid., 10: 359-60.

They are slaves and spies, as you know."³⁴ Yet in all this mutually enjoyable mud-slinging, neither man did any saber-rattling and James certainly did not commit himself to any specific action. Salisbury also had a lengthy conversation with the diplomat which plainly showed that the English were not going to make any rash moves. The earl thought (was he alone in this opinion?) that the pope was a prudent man who would not allow the problem to go beyond the point of no return. Cecil already knew that France and Spain did not want the quarrel to overheat and draw the western powers into a full-scale war.³⁵

Wotton was happy to hear that English public opinion was definitely on Venice's side, even the Catholics seeing nothing but trouble ahead for their beleaguered community if the contest continued. Giustinian, who was not insensitive to the plight of his co-religionists, said that they foresaw either renewed persecution or a begrudging toleration at best if the pope's temporal claims should be severely compromised in the Interdict business. Although Wotton was not going to shed any

³⁴Ibid., 10: 361; Evidently, it was not only the king who was burdened by the Jesuits. Giustinian informed his government that the society was "audacious" even though it was in hiding in London. And this was after the trial and execution of the provincial, Father Henry Garnet, S.J.! He noted that other orders, also in hiding, opposed the Jesuits whose determination siphoned off much of the revenue formerly enjoyed by all. See CSPV, 10: 370.

³⁵CSPV, 10: 361.

tears over the hardships of Catholics in England, he could not express any happiness about their precarious condition while a public officer stationed in a Catholic country. One of his more difficult tasks was to build up his nation's reputation in a land where her name was usually synonymous with heresy, piracy and illegal trade. As he was the only ambassador to vigorously take Venice's side, England's formerly depressed stock began to rise. The Venetians had never been great favorites in London even before the Reformation but they gained much sympathy in their contest with the Papacy. The doge's protests to Rome were translated and circulated in the English capital, the populace being "disabused of that false conception of the Republic which they had formed."³⁶

In that summer of militant expectations, Cecil's accurate reading of the final outcome of the crisis had no part in Wotton's calculations. He was looking for war or at least an armed clash between the Republic and the pope. And as usual, there were hotheads in Spain thirsting for revenge against Venice for insults imagined or otherwise. Likewise in France, there were Huguenots who would seek any excuse to clash with papal interests. But it was Henry IV and not James or his ambassador who held the best cards and these, the shrewd Bourbon played close to his chest. Wotton thought him "cold

³⁶Ibid., 10: 364.

and intricate, more like an oracle than a friend."³⁷ Even the Venetians, those experts at deciphering political moves, were at a loss to explain Henry's supposed abandonment of his interest. Guesses abounded: he was becoming a tool of the Jesuits whom he admittedly admired; he was trying to ingratiate himself with Paul V just as he had with Clement VIII or even to enlist the papacy's help in being elected Holy Roman Emperor. Certainly, Henry believed, Rome had no reason to be warm toward the Habsburgs.

By mid-July, 1606, Wotton himself knew that war was unlikely even though the Venetians had hired several thousand mercenaries to augment their forces. Word was filtering down that Spain (meaning the Duke of Lerma) was totally opposed to war, welcome news to the Republic on two counts; freedom from fear of attack by the still formidable glory-covered infantry and greater leverage in dealing with the pope now that the chance of armed intervention on his behalf by Madrid was slight. With their margin of safety increased, the Venetians could afford to be feisty. As a precaution, Pope Paul continued to look to his military strength, so Wotton could edge on the Republic with promises of James' continued goodwill and armed assistance if needed. Venice had no reason to doubt his word since her own ambassador in London found the

³⁷Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 353.

king warmly concerned about the business, praising the constancy of the ancient polity and promising his complete backing. As James was deep in his cups with his bibulous brother-in-law, Christian IV of Denmark, then on a state visit, Giustinian should have been more skeptical about his rollicking host's wholehearted support of Venetian goals. He met with Salisbury who was a junior English version of Henry IV and still, inexplicably, came away starry-eyed, writing back such nonsense as this: "I gather they would like to see war break out in Italy and would gladly join the Republic and France."³⁸ James also told him that a letter was sent to Wotton giving him permission to assure the Republic personally of his continued support. Wotton, though, needed little prodding to promise the Venetians far more than his sovereign was willing to give. Atmospheric conditions were right for a major policy statement since it was widely believed that an alliance between England and Denmark was being hatched which would include Venice, the Netherlands, some German principalities and the Huguenots, if not Henry IV himself. Much more hazy was the thought that the pope was trying to arrange a pact with Spain and some Italian states to force a decision on the Serene Republic.³⁹

³⁸CSPV, 10: 388.

³⁹Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 360.

With his long experience on the Continent and a bubbling imagination, Wotton never lacked for paper alliances. Having hopes that he could arrange almost anything, the veteran envoy dreamed of visiting courts in western Germany and the protestant cantons of Switzerland as well as the Huguenot strongholds in France. In a major audience, he offered to the doge and Collegio membership in a league very much of his own making but presented in the name of the king. Wotton painted his canvas in bold colors portraying Venice's opposition to papal usurpation as the mark of an entire people rather than of a mere splinter group. And the Republic's interest was not just a parochial matter but something vital to the "universal interest of princes." Of even greater importance was the spiritual factor; both powers were bound to support "the cause of God." Doge Dona replied that he valued the ancient ties of friendship that Wotton appealed to, but that the pope had moderated his position and that an alliance was not a dire need. In thanking his friend, he reassured him that he would keep faith with James and preserve the secrecy of the offer. Even though further rumors flew of the pope's continual rearmament and the pretense of secrecy dropped, the Venetians no longer were driven to panic.⁴⁰

Salisbury had warned his overenthusiastic subordinate that

⁴⁰CSPV, 10: 397.

all promises of the king's assistance were to be limited to the formula "that it shall be at all times as far as the state of his own affairs shall let him."⁴¹ Technically, Wotton added this rider, but was so indiscriminate in his offer of the king's help that anything could be made of it. His next step was to send all the ambassadors in the capital a letter outlining his offer so that all might hear of the largess of his sovereign. The government wrote a letter of effusive praise to James, thanking him for his backing and mentioning Wotton's proposal for an anti-papal league. This was not upsetting to the king as his vanity had been well catered to. Could his prestige be any higher? But Salisbury was appalled. It was true that James had insisted on a postscript in his last letter to Wotton to encourage the Venetians to rely on England's help if in need but the envoy seemed entirely without prudence, making promises in military and naval aid which could not possibly be met. As an acute political mind, Cecil could "read" the Venetians at a distance and that reading told him that England was being used to frighten the pope into total capitulation, thus increasing the power base of Venice on the peninsula. His detestation of Catholicism in his homeland did not necessarily extend to the Continent; if it was in England's interest to stay his hand, he would.

⁴¹Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 361.

salisbury gave Wotton his severest reprimand to date, instructing the errant diplomat to be more wary in the future.

There were other indications that Cecil did not want to humiliate the Papacy just as the Holy See did not want to discontinue efforts to convert James. At about the same time news of Wotton's excesses was reaching home shores, an envoy, the Baron de Magdalene, arrived on a secret mission from Pope Paul to congratulate the king on his escape from the Gunpowder plotters, to plead his indulgence for those of the Roman faith and to assure him of their loyalty and the personal regard of the Holy Father.⁴² Giustinian, who mistakenly believed that the baron was sent by the Duke of Lorraine, thought that Paul V was reaching out to make certain that James would not be overly hostile to him should matters come to a head over doctrine.⁴³ At the same time, the bull was issued prohibiting English Catholics from taking the Oath of Allegiance or attending services of the established church. About a week later, Cecil told Giustinian that the king was sincerely interested in supporting the Republic but not to the point of making an enemy of the pope; and without any intention of "stirring up strife between himself (James) and

⁴²Ludwig Pastor, History of the Popes, 26: 165.

⁴³CSPV, 10: 400.

the faithful."⁴⁴ He was emphatic in his insistence that the protection of the sovereign rights of an independent prince was his sole interest. At no time did communications break down between London and Rome. This is another historical hint that the king was sincere in his public expression that he did not wish to drive his Catholic subjects to desperation in the wake of the parliamentary action resulting from the plot.

Evidently, by October, even Wotton had modified his approach. Before the Collegio, he related a talk that he had shortly before with the Spanish ambassador in which he pleaded the essentially secular nature of the dispute with Rome. Philip III had nothing to fear; James was not trying to pressure Venice into breaking its spiritual allegiance to Rome. But he soon returned to form. In a long speech, Wotton sought to convince his listeners that only the Jesuits would reap the benefits should Venice give in to the pope's demands. He had not even given up his treasured idea of an alliance very much like the one he had proposed the month before. Despite every sign to the contrary, Wotton still thought that Henry IV would join a coalition simply because the Spaniards would be on the other side. With Britain's envoy blithely disregarding the auguries, it is no wonder that the Venetians misread the Crown's intentions. Continuing to talk in terms

⁴⁴Ibid., 10: 403.

of crisis, Giustinian tried to curry favor by reporting the actions of a congregation of cardinals in Rome, all to his mind seeking to take revenge on his native land. This gave James an opportunity to make one of his "devoted to Venetian interests" speeches, in which the generalities flowed like wine at a Whitehall banquet. He, like Wotton, thought an alliance a wonderful thing; there was not even any need to request Henry IV to join. A Bourbon would automatically take the side opposed to the Habsburgs. In closing the performance that pleased his courtiers, the king proclaimed that states were fighting for rights and liberties that were not repugnant to (the liberties) of the Church but "rather her safeguard and support at all times."⁴⁵ Giustinian was in an exasperating position, not because of the king's friendly naive optimism but from his lack of specific commitment. As always, James was on chair's edge waiting to see what Henry IV was going to do. Cecil was cordial and nothing more.

Wotton's case for Venetian intransigence in the face of papal "aggression" was beginning to crumble through circumstance. Spain was not up to war on the peninsula (at least not the full-scale variety) and quickly put her diplomatic machinery into action to settle the question.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Ibid., 10: 400.

⁴⁶From the beginning of 1607 until the Truce of Antwerp in

Wotton may have been unable to carry on the charade of a Spanish conspiracy but in a letter to the king, he continued his customary attack on the Jesuits, a device that always pleased James. In fact, he went so far as to exonerate totally the Papacy and Spain; the society was "the first moving cause of the present troubles and not as instruments...but of their own greatness."⁴⁷ But before the end of the year, he was to show his anger on more than one occasion over Spanish "deceit and perfidy." Don Francisco de Castro was sent by Philip III to work out a peaceable solution to the dispute. Immediately upon his arrival, Wotton went before the Collegio to make some snide remarks about his mission; that he was coming to Venice to read out an indictment and not to mediate. And why should he come to Venice first if the source of the trouble was in Rome?⁴⁸ To James, he described de Castro as young, inexperienced and indecisive in speech. His reception by the doge in the Collegio was correct but cool, he being an envoy from an

March 1609, the prospect of a settlement of the Spanish-Dutch conflict dominated the European diplomatic scene. There was a definite connection between negotiations in the North and the Venetian situation. Ambroglio Spinola, the outstanding Genoese commander of the Spanish forces in Flanders, pointed out to Philip III that Italy was a quagmire for the king's interests and would undoubtedly stiffen Dutch resistance. See CSPV, 10:464-65.

⁴⁷Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 366.

⁴⁸CSPV, 10: 428.

always hostile monarchy. One reason de Castro would be more apt to try to deal with Venice first was the suspicion aroused in Rome by any Spanish move on the peninsula. Wotton, a student of Italian politics, pointed out to the king that Pope Paul was Sieneese and the haughty foreigners that subjugated his native city were only barely tolerable by their orthodoxy.⁴⁹

As the envoy of a crown officially at peace with Philip III, Wotton could hardly avoid making a courtesy call on de Castro at the Spanish embassy. Before finishing an audience with the doge, he had lightheartedly promised to behave like a "good Venetian." After an exchange of pleasantries, the Kentishman's own intemperance got the better of him as he began to exult the role of his sovereign in the Interdict, reiterating that it was not a religious issue at all but the vital concern of all princes. Although it does not seem that Wotton unfavorably compared Philip to James, the nobleman flushed with anger at his bravado. If Cardenas, the resident ambassador, had not quickly stepped in between the two men and turned it all into a joke, a very serious incident might have occurred.⁵⁰ Wotton related the incident to the doge and advised all assembled to be cautious in all dealings with the

⁴⁹Smith, 1: 366-67.

⁵⁰Ibid., 1: 370.

spaniards, a policy which that government pursued as a matter of course. With his usual enthusiasm, he again brought up his brainchild, the anti-papal alliance, at a point when his own government was trying to disengage from all such plans.

In London, Giustinian was still hearing pleasant words from the king but more to the point was a deftly phrased warning from Salisbury that some people were saying that James "will add little to his reputation, for the difference between the Republic and the Pope will soon be accommodated by another prince to the augmenting of the Papal claims and pretensions, for the Republic will withdraw from the position she now assumes and will be obliged to make public demonstration and subservience to the Pope..."⁵¹ It seems by this time that Venetian influence in England was definitely on the wane. Giustinian was promised a desperately needed grain export license by James but was left hanging by Cecil's evasive answers. Obviously, the secretary was trying to obtain trade concessions but his cavalier handling of the ambassador's requests showed that the Republic's needs were not pressing concerns in London. The eventual granting of the license in December, 1606, did not lessen the Italian's apprehensions. With a tinge of bitterness, he informed his government that "it is clear that the Earl of Salisbury is the hindering cause

⁵¹CSPV, 10: 432.

and as long as he remains of his present opinion, I see little hope of success."⁵²

From early winter, negotiations were moving on the Continent but unsteadily. Envoy de Castro asked that the Republic lift her protest before the pope withdrew his strictures, a totally unacceptable request. After the New Year, Wotton told the doge that his private sources informed him of the continued rearmament of papal forces and the tacit promise of Spanish help if Venice refused to come to terms. Count Fuentes, he warned, had issued orders from his governor's chair in Milan to raise three thousand troops in the Trentino and the Tyrol.⁵³ Spanish efforts to arrange a peaceful settlement clearly were reaching an impasse but the use of force was actually a very distant threat. The initiative had to be placed in other hands and those were in Paris. Piero Priuli, the Republic's envoy in the French capital, was told by Henry IV that his country had to face reality; that pro-Venetian feeling in Europe was not as prevalent as the Signory would have liked to think. As expected, Henry also took the opportunity to belittle English promises as nothing more than empty words.⁵⁴ Early in

⁵²Ibid., 10: 440.

⁵³Ibid., 10: 454.

⁵⁴Ibid., 10: 455.

February 1607, Cardinal Francois de Joyeuse, Henry's special ambassador, was preparing to come to Venice to cap the potentially dangerous volcano. If Wotton was ever befuddled, it was now; as his last letter to the king had assured James and possibly himself that events could never move so fast.

Late in the previous year, the resident French ambassador, Fresne-Canaye, had tested the waters of Wotton's gullibility by proposing a joint English-French venture to permanently keep the pot boiling permanently in Italy. When the news reached Salisbury, he saw through the scheme immediately as one designed to break the already fragile relationship between London and Madrid to the benefit of Paris. Wotton himself was not taken in but he expected the Spanish effort to obtain a settlement to be a protracted one. But Henry IV was making his move, proving that energy and ambition were a formidable combination his brother kings could not match. As he related to Salisbury, Wotton was amazed that Joyeuse received the pope's leave to go right to the source and deal over the table. French interest swept aside the niceties of protocol as de Castro still had not left the city.⁵⁵ Sending this urbane ecclesiastic was a master stroke on Henry's part and a perfect way for the pope to save face since the Frenchman's credentials were those of a royal diplomat but wrapped in the

⁵⁵Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 376.

colors of a prince of the Church.

As Joyeuse started his work on Italian soil, Wotton was resigned to the outcome but still was encouraged by his Venetian friends to insist upon the point of sovereignty in his audiences. This approach, they felt, would strengthen their own hand in future dealings with the Papacy. With a mixture of stubbornness and patriotism, the Kentishman refused to greet the cardinal, making him the sole holdout among the diplomatic corps. Obviously, this did not go unnoticed but the French resident who was no friend of his English opposite number, declined to do more than have his secretary remind Wotton's that his master's actions were contrary to diplomatic usage. Ironically, Wotton did not have the slightest objection to Joyeuse as the Bourbon representative but he would not participate in the honors paid him as a churchman which he believed (at least for public consumption) were rooted in superstition and the political machinations of past kings.⁵⁶

Wotton was not the only one upset over the impending French success. Feeling in Spain tended to blame James for opening the door for Henry by encouraging the Venetians in the first place to resist Rome. Philip III firmly believed that a united stand by his country and England could have preserved peace in Italy indefinitely without French interference. In

⁵⁶Ibid., 1: 377.

addition, Henry would never have attempted to force the situation militarily on the peninsula since the action would have flown in the face of his plans to keep the pope in the bonds of friendship.⁵⁷ Another serious concern for Philip and for James, if he realized it at the time, was a boost in prestige for the French interest in negotiations over the Netherlands. Either Gallic-dominated or independent, that area was of vital interest to England. It was no secret, least of all to Madrid, that a major war in Italy would eliminate forever the chance of regaining the Dutch provinces, a bitter and humiliating pill to swallow.

In contrast to Spain's realistic gloom, James' capacity for fantasy seemed never ending. Henry's bold successful policy, perfectly clear to Salisbury, had not registered with the king. Wotton's initial misreading of the speed of French movements can only be said to be partially to blame. Even toward the end of February, 1607, James said that he was willing to join an alliance if Henry would take the lead. He invited Giustinian to write his government to encourage the King of France who only lacked determination. The envoy tried to explain that Henry was a pro-Venetian neutral and that like James, valued above all else, the role of mediator.⁵⁸ Cecil

⁵⁷CSPV, 10: 463-64.

⁵⁸Ibid., 10: 471-73.

enumerated a list of reasons why Henry would have nothing to do with an alliance. In addition to those already mentioned, the royal secretary, like the Bourbon monarch, scoffed at the maintenance of permanent alliances. As a matter of calculation, learned in part from his capable father, Lord Burghley, he could with patience pinpoint alike the weaknesses of friends and potential enemies; thus his success in keeping Britain's interests on an even keel. His prediction of the previous year was coming true; no one wanted a major conflagration. Before the end of March, Joyeuse worked out an accomodation with the touchy negotiators of the Republic and was on his way to Rome to seek the pope's almost certain approval.

Wotton was not going to allow himself to be on the "losing" side. In a good mood, he appeared before the Collegio to congratulate his friends on their victory over the forces of darkness, and while praising the uncompromising stand of the Senate, he lauded his sovereign's declaration of support as a vital factor in their victory. Noting that the Republic continued to amass armed strength, Wotton quoted an Irish proverb which he said was "commonly in the mouth of all that savage people: 'While treating with your foe, double bar the door.'"⁵⁹ The doge, who seemed genuinely thankful for

⁵⁹Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 385.

English backing, said that the fatherland reached a meeting of the minds with Rome and in no way could the result be called a capitulation. Great satisfaction was taken in the continued banishment of the Jesuits while the Capuchins and Theatines were readmitted with an almost condescending wave of the hand.⁶⁰ Henry IV had become a strong advocate of the Jesuits but Spanish hostility and the present neutrality of Rome could not be overcome by the French.

Where the lifting of an interdict would usually be accomplished with public festivities, nothing of the sort was allowed by the Signory. Instead, a most exacting procedure was followed. On April 20th, a secretary of the Senate together with officers of the prison brought the two criminous clerks to the French embassy, not to be handed over to ecclesiastics but to the ambassador, specifically at the request of the king and without prejudice to the state's right to try the pair. The felons were quickly put in Joyeuse's custody as a papal legate, thus both sides had their honor kept intact. As part of the official silence, the cardinal had to celebrate mass in the patriarch's parish church and not in St. Mark's which could almost be considered a government shrine. Absolution, which was unavoidable, was granted in private. Wotton was certainly correct when he declared that

⁶⁰Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 385.

the entire business could have been cleared up six months earlier with very little damage to papal prestige. Now the pontiff was relaxing in his new villa, Sir Henry reported, very content and hopefully a wiser man.⁶¹

* * *

⁶¹Ibid., 1: 390-92.

Now to be considered briefly is a part of Wotton's mission which has always been given more than its due; his attempt to aid the growth of Protestantism in Venice. One reason for this is the role of Paolo Sarpi in Venetian politics during the period and the Republic's partially successful stand against Rome during the Interdict. Sarpi, an ogre to most Catholic historians, has been something of a hero to two other groups not usually found in the same corner: orthodox Evangelical Christians and free thinkers who have imbibed the values of the Enlightenment. Had Sarpi or the Interdict or both never existed, Wotton's efforts to proselytize would be little noted as they resulted in total failure.

In addition, they have given a false impression of the duties of a Jacobean ambassador and his position in the rigid hierarchy that prescribed his activities which primarily involved enhancing the reputation of his sovereign and carrying out Crown policy. Since James cared little about advancing Protestantism (as opposed to seeking a reputation as a noted royal theologian and leader of the Christian people in the mode of Constantine) to make this a significant part of the ambassador's story is a distortion.

At the conclusion of the Interdict, correct if not friendly relations resumed between Rome and the Republic. The desire, on the part of both the pope and Henry IV to reinstate the Jesuits was to meet with total refusal, a

blockage which was to remain for almost half a century. Pope Paul's worries were far from over though, as the spectre of a schismatic Venice was constantly before his eyes. The work of Fra Fulgentio Micanzio and especially of Fra Paolo Sarpi would lead to enormous difficulties if not halted, or so he thought.

In early October, 1607, Sarpi was brutally attacked by assassins widely believed to be in the pay of the pope's nephew, Cardinal Borghese, or of the Jesuits or both. That Cardinal Bellarmine had warned Sarpi of such a possibility did not seem to enter the equation. With three stab wounds to the head, only the finest team of surgeons led by the masterful Aquapendente of Padua could save his life. Wotton obviously was outraged as Sarpi was a friend if only an unofficial one. A horrible deed it was, but the ambassador's little used practical side saw it as an opportunity to heap coals on the heads of the papists and renew the rift with Rome. William Bedell, Wotton's latest chaplain, had arrived after the lifting of the Interdict and made immediate contact with the Sarpi faction. From this encounter, he was naively convinced that "had this breach continued but a year or two longer, the Pope might have bidden farewell his part."⁶²

In meeting with Sarpi and Fulgentio, Bedell, the exemplary

⁶²E.S. Shuckburgh, ed., Two Biographies of William Bedell, Bishop of Kilmore with a selection of His Letters and an Unpublished Treatise, (Cambridge: The University Press, 1902), 230.

cleric and fine scholar, worked hard to effect religious change in the Serenissima. One problem he brought with him was the puritan-weighted baggage that saw Babylon everywhere that Jerusalem did not yet exist. In a letter to Adam Newton, the Dean of Durham, he described the people of Venice as abandoned to idolatry, "given over to all manner of uncleanness for a punishment of that Spiritual whoredom..."⁶³ Bedell was a fit chaplain for the ambassador as both men thought along similar lines. Wotton, even though expressing unbounded admiration for the Venetian polity and governing class, made much noise over the ignorance of the majority of the people. Bedell did not know whether it was more ignorance or sin as both, in his eyes, seemed to mesh. Like Wotton, he saw the Jesuits as an ever-present threat: "They are a just (sic) monarchy by themselves, mighty in number, money possessions, friends; insomuch, that they are not only envied of other religions and generally of the clergy, but almost feared of the Pope himself..."⁶⁴ Protestantism obviously could not be preached openly but nobles frequented Wotton's residence for sermons under the pretext that literary discussions were being held there. Flemish and German merchants also would hold meetings at the house of the Zechinelli attended by Wotton and

⁶³Ibid., 229.

⁶⁴Ibid., 235.

sympathetic Venetian clerics. It cannot be said that these get-togethers were rousing successes since a good many of the class that Wotton hoped to attract were indifferent to religious matters in general.

As already discussed, Wotton was a constant advocate of paper alliances to break the power of the Papacy and its sometime Habsburg ally. Bedell, probably inspired by Sarpi, harped the same tune, simplifying the deep differences on the Catholic "side." Fra Paolo, renowned as an Italian patriot, actually was not averse to seeing the peninsula turned into a battleground as long as Rome would suffer.⁶⁵ Actually, at the conclusion of the Interdict, chances for a permanent peace were quite good. None of the major Christian powers wanted to be involved in an Italian conflagration. Henry IV sought and attained enormous prestige at the Vatican; Madrid, with its holdings on the peninsula, certainly did not want to appear the arrogant overlord in a nation whose titular head was also the successor of St. Peter.

To Bedell, the most practical way to effect religious change was by influencing the literate class (also the Jesuit position) by importing and when necessary, translating Protestant classics and of course, the Scriptures. Wotton had

⁶⁵Moritz Ritter, ed., Briefe und Acten zur Geschichte des Dreissigjahrigen Krieges, vol. 2 (Munich, 1870), 85.

already been the subject of numerous complaints by the papal nuncios both before and after the Interdict for alleged book smuggling. Certainly, the authorities knew about this but consistently played it down in the face of Roman inquiry. Some of the works mentioned by Bedell are Gabriel Powell's De Antichristo, William Perkins' His Problem or Problema de Romanae Fidei Ementito Catholicissimo and the fountainhead, Calvin's Institutes. He was so impressed with Sir Edwin Sandys' Europae Speculum that he had it translated into Italian, and through Wotton's influence, rushed into print.⁶⁶ One of Sarpi's friends, Pietro Priuli, the former ambassador to France, had his name associated with another operation dealing with forbidden material. His secretary, Francesco Biondi, later to achieve some recognition as a playwright and historian in England, had hidden Protestant works in the diplomat's baggage. On arriving home, the printed matter was seized, but neither Priuli nor Biondi was charged. Berlingherio Gessi, the post-Interdict papal nuncio to Venice, complained strongly of these and other activities, but all the

⁶⁶Full title: Europae Speculum or a View or Survey of the State of Religion in the Western Part of the World, London, 1605. Bedell saw in Sandys' work an excellent means "to convey the reproofs of the abuses and errors of the Papacy in public discourses...In this kind, there is extant already in our tongue a work so proper to that purpose, as if God had directed the pen of the author to that special end, to do Him service in this place." Two Biographies, 247.

satisfaction he got was that of protesting.⁶⁷

Perhaps Bedell's most cherished hope was to start a protestant congregation in Venice. This blended well with Wotton's belief that the time was favorable for such an enterprise. The envoy called on Giovanni Diodati, a biblical translator living in Geneva, to minister to the underground community. Sarpi told Diodati that no fewer than 12,000 citizens were committed or leaned toward reform which was sheer nonsense. To cover himself, he maintained that nothing could be gained until a complete break in relations with the Papacy took place. Until then, he should work through the merchants: Flemings, Germans and French.⁶⁸ Bedell was optimistic but Diodati, seeing that the nobility was lukewarm, was not and departed before anything substantial could be accomplished. About the only positive result was a renewal of contact between Sarpi and two influential Calvinists, Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, widely known as the "Huguenot Pope," and Prince Christian of Anhalt, who tried to advance his religion by breaking the power of the Habsburgs. Thus far, this ruler had succeeded in uniting a number of Protestant princes in the Union of 1608. If Venice could be added, a significant anti-Roman coalition could be brought into being. Diodati urged

⁶⁷Georg Rein, Paolo Sarpi und Die Protestanten (Helsingfors, 1904), 73-74; CSPV., 11: 248.

⁶⁸Two Biographies, 248.

both Mornay and Christian to survey the Venetian scene carefully, so this prompted the prince to send Christoph, Baron von Dohna, to the Republic to gather intelligence, especially from Sarpi. Like Diodati, Dohna came upon the wall of Sarpi's reticence and inability to turn his intellectual anti-papism into a real popular movement. He pleaded with the friar to come out in the open and fight Rome. Sarpi had a patented answer: he could oppose the Papacy more effectively from behind the scenes.⁶⁹ Even Bedell experienced the futility of trying to get Sarpi into the fray. He had thought that the assassination attempt would have awakened him to the dangers that lurked everywhere and instilled some spirit which, according to the Englishman, was the only thing Sarpi lacked.⁷⁰

Like Bedell, Sarpi had an unbounded faith in the printed word. As a substitute for overt action, he proposed to Dohna that cleverly written broadsheets be printed with Wotton's cooperation. Sarpi volunteered to write these, specifically attacking some point of Catholic doctrine. As for preaching, the foreign community, especially the Germans, were free from interference from the Inquisition and Sarpi unjustifiably believed that sermons of the same content would eventually be

⁶⁹Ritter, Briefe und Acten, 2: 82.

⁷⁰Two Biographies, 249.

tolerated.⁷¹ The closest Venetians came to hearing Protestant sermons was from the Lenten preaching of Sarpi's alter ego, Fulgentio Micanzio, an individual possessed of the magnetism and fire which Fra Paolo lacked. But the bulk of the populace did not understand his crypto-Protestantism or attached a Catholic meaning to his words. At this point, Sarpi's hopes for a break with Rome were just about dead for public opinion was veering toward the pope. Even some of the theologians who had written against the Papacy arrived in Rome humbly submissive. In 1609, the Protestant cause in Venice received its worst blow, the active opposition of Henry IV. A letter of Diodati's fell into Henry's hands unmasking the entire operation of Sarpi and Fulgentio and this was read publicly before the Senate by the French ambassador. Sarpi's career suffered a severe setback but more than this, the cause for which he stood, if such a muddled approach could be so described, was dead.⁷² Wotton and Bedell stood equally silent and downcast for the unpredictable Henry had struck again and put English efforts in limbo.

⁷¹Ritter, Briefe und Acten, 2: 79, 81, 87.

⁷²Rein, Sarpi, 135-41.

CHAPTER FOUR

One of the more interesting and intriguing assignments in which Wotton was engaged involved Hugh O'Neill, the Earl of Tyrone, often called the uncrowned king of Ireland. In mid-1607, the nobleman was summoned to England not to face charges but to iron out problems he as a lord was burdened with in dealing with vassals. Nevertheless Tyrone had a fear, based on some truth, that he would spend the rest of his life as an honored guest in the Tower of London. So as not to test the fates, his son Henry had arranged through the archducal court in Brussels for a Flemish ship to take him, the Earl of Tyrconnell and most of their families and retainers to the Continent. Disembarking first in France, he found his visit protested by the English ambassador in Paris but winked at by Henry IV. Passing into the Spanish Netherlands, his presence aroused the ire of James' resident who demanded his seizure but the archduke playfully dallied for months while Tyrone decided on his final destination. Hearing that he would not be especially welcome in Spain, O'Neill and his band made their way over the Alps to friendly Milan, well within Wotton's field of interest.

Tyrone was not just another Irish rebel desperately seeking Spanish help but a princely figure who came within an

ace of securing an independent monarchy for his homeland. On top of this, both James and Wotton were personally involved with this man they wanted to brand a traitor. While James was trying every means to gain the throne of England, he was cultivating good relations with O'Neill, who had formerly charmed Elizabeth with his nimble tongue and fine manners but who now was her deadly adversary. From our vantage point, the crown was destined to rest undisturbed on James' head, but given his clandestine dealings with Tudor rebels, Stuart was not a comfortable calm successor to King Arthur. As for Wotton, being tarred with Essex's brush once was enough. He had been close to Robert Devereux at the very time that dashing young noble was planning an assault on London to take Elizabeth captive and proclaim James the rightful heir. But the memory of his own role in Essex's surrender could not have been a pleasant one. Essex's dealings with Tyrone were not the simple English-Irish confrontation as they are generally portrayed. Walter Devereux, Essex's father, was a friend of the Irish earl and O'Neill's sentimental ties were strained by the sad duty he was forced into by circumstance. Rumors flew at the time that Essex had been offered the Irish crown by Tyrone as part of a general peace even though the latter seemed to be on the verge of driving the foreigners into the sea. Just as in the Gunpowder Plot, a pall was drawn over all the irregularities in the Essex affair after his execution.

Soon afterwards, Tyrone's ascendancy was ended by that gallant and gracious knight, Lord Mountjoy, former intimate of Essex and soon to be friend of O'Neill. This lack of vindictiveness marks all of Tyrone's relations with the best of men sent out from England and further brings into question the popular view put forth by Wotton that the Irishman was some kind of unwashed savage who had bitten the royal hand that sustained his honor. From Paris, the ever practical Henry IV urged Elizabeth not to let Spain reap the long-range benefits by placing the Irish under a harsh yoke. All this was rendered superfluous as the queen died the day after Tyrone's submission and James, with much to keep under cover, welcomed the humble Celtic chieftain kindly on his arrival in London. Unfortunately, the king's hack appointees and Tyrone's native Irish opponents worked in their own scurrilous way to humiliate him further thus contributing to his flight. At the English court, the Venetian ambassador Giustinian remarked that the event "considerably disturbed the King and Council who hold frequent meetings about it."¹ No one of influence believed that the Spanish were directly involved but suspicion was automatically aroused whenever Irish affairs came up for discussion. Venice's representative in Paris, Piero Priuli, informed his government that James had begged

¹CSPV, 11: 41.

Henry to arrest Tyrone and the naturally skeptical Bourbon complied in a fashion. O'Neill sought the king's grace saying that he had fled in the cause of the Faith. Henry seemed to accept this profession as genuine but the undercurrent at court said he was moved much more by his personal dislike of James. As mentioned, he granted an immediate release on the condition that the "pilgrim" go to Flanders instead of to his deadly enemy, Spain. When the English ambassador complained about the preferential treatment accorded a rebel, Henry continued the charade and sent a troop of cavalry with orders to rearrest the fugitive. Naturally, they reported that the band had already crossed the border into the domain of the Archdukes before the elusive earl could be apprehended.²

In mid-November 1607, a strangely worded royal proclamation was issued denigrating the quality of Tyrone's title and accusing him of conspiring with "priests and Jesuits" to foment rebellion but nowhere was he called a traitor or an outlaw. James called upon all European rulers to refrain from giving the Celtic chieftain aid and comfort. But it was not the brutally hard document that a Tudor would be likely to issue. Wotton dutifully requested the Venetians' cooperation in arresting Tyrone should he and his party set foot on the Republic's territory. Even he realized that this

²Ibid.

was highly improbable; Wotton remembered the earl quite well saying that he knew him as "cunning and suspicious a character as you could find."³ Most thought that Spain would be O'Neill's first choice as a refuge but Madrid was in no mood to compromise the peace in Flanders or to deliberately bait the English. The only firm alternative was Rome but James' Council was even more nervous about Tyrone being the pope's guest, since in their eyes, Paul V was actually more likely to instigate trouble in Ireland than the Spanish were. According to Giustinian, English Catholics were very hopeful about the Irishman's removal to Rome, believing that the recusancy laws directed against them would be suspended. As for himself, he wrote uncynically: "God grant it will not have the opposite effect."⁴ In Venice, the government was not so anxious to please James and his envoy on this matter. The Senate passed a resolution not to arrest the fugitive, as Wotton had requested, but to ask that the earl retire should he cross the border into the Republic's territory.⁵

Meanwhile, Tyrone was spending the winter in comfortable quarters under the archdukes' protection. Early in 1608, it was rumored in London that he had written to James explaining

³CSPV, 11: 72.

⁴Ibid., 11: 85.

⁵Ibid., 11: 89.

the circumstances of his departure and requesting negotiations with the English ambassador in Brussels. It would not be farfetched to believe that he would try to conciliate a ruler with whom he had dealt in friendly fashion in the past. It was quite likely his last chance to return to Ireland and exercise his lordship again. But nothing more was heard about it. In March, with another Spanish refusal in hand, Tyrone departed northern Europe for the final time, crossed the Alps through Switzerland and entered Milan toward the end of the month. As noted by Wotton, the earl marched in more as an army commander than as a man on the run. He and his entourage of about forty were heavily armed which surprised the inhabitants since even ambassadors were not allowed to carry such equipment into the city. Wotton was angry over the cordial reception the group received from the governor, Count Fuentes. Not only was the admission of a rebel into his state an insult to James, but it also made a mockery of the pretense that the King of Spain really was dealing in good faith with a brother monarch. Fuentes replied that the greeting was nothing out of the ordinary but Wotton said that his intelligence service was much more efficient than the count supposed.⁶

⁶Calendar of State Papers Relating to Ireland in the Reign of James I. Eds. R.W. Russell and John P. Prendergast. (London, 1874) 2: 652.

Wotton's personal animosity was joined to the official outrage he was dutybound to display to foreigners. Any ruler who could not control an over-mighty subject was just that much less a king. James was made to look the fool as his pleas to arrest Tyrone went unheeded. Wherever he went in Italy, the earl was styled a prince and received with all the pomp that went along with the title. His reception in Rome was certainly more than that befitting a noble; by the express command of Pope Paul, the English Catholics residing in the Holy City went out to greet him. With Peter Lombard, the Primate of Ireland then in exile, O'Neill made the grand circuit visiting cardinals and ambassadors. Wotton must have been very surprised to hear that Tyrone spoke most reverently of James to all the English and Scotsmen that he came upon but heaped coals on the head of Robert Cecil who was also Essex's bitter target.⁷ In the next letter to the king, Wotton, in his guise of Ottavio Baldi, sent word that a professional assassin, probably a Venetian exiled in Mantua, came to him with a proposal to murder Tyrone without even knowing who the earl was and without any idea of his personal appearance. He was not shocked by the offer for he often alluded to dealings with the underworld in non-violent roles but hunting down fellow Englishmen or even the despised Irish, both he and his

⁷Ibid. 2: 655.

sovereign shrank from.⁸ Wotton continued to receive information from his spies in Rome while the earl's presence there was a live issue. James must have felt relieved knowing that Tyrone was not going to reveal his duplicity to the world. Could it have been that the rebel was actually an honorable man? He continued to praise James publicly in a fellowship that was inclined to think the king an ogre especially for the moral support he had given Venice during the Interdict. Pope Paul still had good thoughts about one of his favorite problem children, even going so far as to say that James was not really a persecutor of Catholics. Robert Parsons, the king's worthiest Jesuit adversary, thought that the pope was wildly misinformed about the wily Stuart and that the source of the misinformation was a host of James' secret friends in the innards of the Vatican. Wotton informed Salisbury that Paul was trying to get Catholic princes to aid Tyrone financially both to lessen the burden on the papal purse and to make a concerted effort to retake Ireland. According to the ambassador, Paul believed that James would be much more likely to be reconciled to the Church if Ireland were in Catholic hands.⁹

None of this would ever be. O'Neill was a tired old man

⁸Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 422, 423.

⁹CSP Ireland, 2: 664.

who was destined to be forgotten even by rulers friendly to his cause. Spain was consumed by the war with the Dutch and Henry IV was building up his strength to break the hated Habsburg encirclement. Tyrone deserved better.¹⁰

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¹⁰Sean O'Faolain, one of twentieth century Ireland's leading literary figures and a biographer of Tyrone, was aware of the sad fate of the one Irishman of European stature of his time: "It is one of the most dismaying falsifications of history that this man, who was a European figure in his intelligent awareness of the large nature of the conflict in which he took part...has been lost to European history and made part of a merely local piety." And Tyrone's "was the first movement that his people ever made toward some sort of intellectual self-criticism to their place and their responsibilities in the European system." Quoted from The Great O'Neill, (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1942), 353-354.

During the Interdict, Wotton had received a reprimand from Salisbury for his excessive zeal, for getting too close to the government to which he was accredited. His actions did not stem so much from setting aside his own country's interests as sincerely viewing Venice's needs as part of the British interest in Italy. This hard - even hot - headedness, one of the more unattractive traits in Wotton's make-up, showed itself during the presentation to the Venetians of James' Premonition which was an answer to Cardinal Bellarmine on the matter of the oath of allegiance devised after the Gunpowder Plot.

Production of controversial and didactic literature was a long-term interest with the king, and in this regard, Wotton was not taken by surprise by his latest duty. While still in Scotland, James wrote Basilikon Doron or "Royal Gift" for his heir, Prince Henry. In it, he set forth his theory of the divine right of kings, wholly or in part to offset his intellectual upbringing under the tutelage of the Christian humanist, George Buchanan. A model of the switch-carrying Scottish schoolmaster, Buchanan was a type of religious populist who preached that a ruler was under contract to his people to administer the kingdom under the law. If the monarch turned tyrant, in extreme cases, he could be overthrown and put to death. So it is not surprising that James lumped the Presbyterians together with the Jesuits as

threats to his life and throne. Basilikon Doron, in a Latin translation, was published in London in 1604 and soon reached Rome where it was received with consideration if not with enthusiasm.¹¹ But this was the pre-Gunpowder Plot era and there was still a slim hope that James would follow the example of Henry IV.

The Oath of Allegiance, almost a logical result of the fear-filled situation, put an end to the mild optimism. Such a device was worded to even further enflame the atmosphere:

"...and I do further swear that I so from my heart abhor, detest and abjure, as impious and heretical, this damnable doctrine and position, that princes which be excommunicated or deprived by the Pope may be deposed or murdered by their subjects or any other whatsoever."¹²

This, James innocently pretended, would divide loyal Catholics from the detestable merchants of rebellion. Wotton was comfortable with the oath and was sure that the Venetians, especially during the Interdict, would approve. Ultimately though, calling a papal action heretical rather than merely unjust or even un-Christian could not sit well with any state that was officially Catholic. The whole purpose of the oath was to impress upon the English people and as many abroad who

¹¹In London, James' book was a big success since it appeared only a few days after Elizabeth's death and the reading public was curious about the personal opinions of their new ruler.

¹²Quoted in J.P. Kenyon, ed., The Stuart Constitution (Cambridge: The University Press, 1966), 458-59.

would listen, that papists in general and Jesuits in particular were a disloyal lot. It was also in fact, an act of desperation, for in spite of the plot, people, at considerable risk to themselves, were still going over to the old religion. Wotton knew this from personal experience. He was no fool and could see that it created a reservoir of bitterness, for the vast majority of Catholics were loyal and viewed all acts of terrorism with abhorrence.¹³

George Blackwell, the Archpriest and chief Catholic clergyman in England, took the oath and urged others to do so. For his pains, he was kept in comfortable semi-confinement in the Clink. He tried to defend his course of action but was met head-on by Cardinal Bellarmine who admonished him gently and urged him to reconsider.¹⁴ James, true to his nature as a royal busybody, would not let the issue remain dormant. Anonymously, but with Stuart authorship common knowledge, he replied with a tome curiously titled A Threefold Wedge for a Threefold Knot, the three knots being the two papal briefs

¹³Gardiner wrote the following: "Men who would have been satisfied to allow the deposing power to be buried in the folios of theologians and who would never have thought of allowing it to have any practical influence upon their actions, were put upon their mettle as soon as they were required to renounce a theory which they had been taught from their childhood to believe in almost as one of the articles of the faith." History of England, 1: 292.

¹⁴Much of the background information for the following comes from Brodrick, Robert Bellarmine, "The Cardinal vs. the King of England" 264-302.

warning against the oath and Bellarmine's letter to Blackwell. Popularly known as the Apology for the Oath, it was filled with the fear of deposition and assassination, James accusing the pontiffs and the Jesuits of celebrating the murders of kings not their liking such as the last Valois, Henry III. The Apology was not merely a hodgepodge of polemics; it was a genuinely learned effort citing the works of the Fathers of the Church, the documents of the early Councils and the dealings of kings and emperors with Rome. Above all, it came from the pen of a monarch (with much unofficial help) who, unlike Elizabeth, was deeply involved in Italian affairs. For some years after the Interdict crisis, there was real concern if not fright over the English attempt to introduce Anglican-style preaching and printed matter into the country through Venice. It was believed in Rome that the Republic's oft repeated defense of not wanting to offend so mighty a king as James was merely a cover to allow forbidden material to circulate on the peninsula.

English Catholics were now under far greater pressure than under the late queen since a window was being made into their souls not only by forcing them to attend the services of the established church but also to partake of Holy Communion. Opinion was divided on what approach to take. Should the king and Parliament be treated as accomplices or should James be considered merely the half-willing tool of radical anti-

papists? Henry IV, through his ambassador, urged Pope Paul to ignore James' writings because any further strong reaction to the hyper-sensitive royal theologian might put even more severe restrictions on English Catholics. But the pontiff, with rashness, rejected the sage advice and had Bellarmine go to work again to answer the British Solomon. Another "anonymous" tome appeared entitled the Reply of Matthew Torti in which the cardinal, although remaining civil in his language, took off the velvet glove and slashed away at his opponent for equating Catholics with rebels and for terming the papal deposing power heretical. A far deeper thrust was made as he reminded James of a secret offer the king had made to Clement VIII to ameliorate the conditions of Catholics. This overture, which came from Edinburgh, convinced the pontiff to help smooth James' way to the throne of England by withdrawing support for all other candidates.¹⁵

¹⁵James said that the pope's letters to England were meant to exclude him. Bellarmine answered: "On the contrary, they were drafted rather in favor of the King of Scotland, because they consisted of an exhortation to the Catholics to promote, as far as in them lay, the succession of an upright and orthodox monarch and the envoys of that King had given good reasons for believing that their master was such a one, and not averse from embracing the Catholic Faith. This hope received a striking confirmation when the King addressed extremely kind letters to the Pope and to Cardinals Aldobrandini and Bellarmine, in which he begged, among other things, that some Scotsman might be raised to the purple, to

Bellarmino's reply caused the king real consternation as connivance with the Holy See to gain a crown was a very serious charge especially against a ruler who fancied himself the leader of Protestant Europe. A battery of theologians led by the saintly scholar bishop, Lancelot Andrewes, was called upon to revise the Apology and to help with a section entitled the Premonition to All Most Mighty Monarches, Kings, Free Princes and States of Christendom.¹⁶ James made some points by calling their attention to the landed wealth of the Church on the Continent but his intemperance undermined his efforts to convince fellow rulers. A tirade against the pope as anti-Christ was a ludicrous raving exercise that even an uncritical friend like Wotton passed over it in silence. The book had not made its Venetian debut when the signals from other capitals already indicated a diplomatic disaster. Royal couriers were sent to such courts as Lorraine, Bavaria, Savoy, and Vienna. In Spain, France and Venice, the delicate task fell to the resident envoys. Antonio Foscarini, the Venetian ambassador in Paris, related Henry IV's reaction. Rather than give a direct answer, the Bourbon monarch said that he would not read it on account of its theological complexity; and

act as his representative at the Court of Rome." Quoted in Brodrick, Robert Bellarmine, 283.

¹⁶See David Harris Willson, "James I and His Literary Assistants," Huntington Library Quarterly, 8, 35-57.

besides, he did not care for the subject no matter how it was presented. He handed it over to Cardinal du Perron to look over and had his Jesuit confessor, Cotton, do the same.¹⁷ Speaking gruffly about James' controversies, Henry said that rulers who held their tongues knew better how to preserve their authority and dignity.¹⁸ Venice's envoy in Spain, Saranzo, reported that Sir Charles Cornwallis' attempt to present the book was a fiasco. The Duke of Lerma warned him that it was futile, so the ambassador just gave a superficial account of the work and asked Philip to answer James on any points with which he did not agree. His Catholic Majesty simply sidestepped the questions, ending the audience. The Emperor and the Duke of Bavaria would not even meet with John Barclay, whom James had sent to Germany. In Brussels, Archduke Albert told Sir Thomas Edmondes, Wotton's close friend, that as a former cardinal, he could not in good conscience receive the volume, so no presentation was even attempted.¹⁹

In Rome, the book was carefully read and a list of errors

¹⁷Du Perron thought the Roman theologians far too severe; he said it would be far better for a Frenchman to reply to the king. There was even talk of sending the cardinal to England to discuss certain points with James but this pope was against it. See Pastor, History of the Popes, 26: 176.

¹⁸CSPV, 11: 299.

¹⁹Ibid., 11: 306, 374.

drawn up. Pope Paul informed the secretary of the Venetian ambassador that the doctrine contained in it was evil and requested in a firm but polite manner that the diplomat write to the doge not to receive James' writings and, in addition, to ban their distribution. The secretary seemed to agree that the material contained in the book was damnable and that steps would be taken to prevent its publication.²⁰ Whether he was speaking about the original Latin or an Italian translation or both is unclear. A week before Wotton came before the doge for the presentation ceremony, the papal nuncio had his opportunity to denounce the work, carefully requesting that it be accepted but that its circulation be banned. He was reassured by the doge on two counts: that care would be taken to protect the Catholic faith and that friendship with the King of England would be maintained. Meanwhile, the Senate passed a resolution requiring that Wotton should be politely received and thanked for the continued good will shown by the English government but that the book should be handed over immediately to the grand chancellor and locked up in the secret section of the Chancery.²¹

On July 25, 1609, St. James' day and the anniversary of the king's coronation, Wotton proudly presented his master's

²⁰Ibid., 11: 297.

²¹Ibid., 11: 301-02.

book and made an elaborate speech. He wished to put their minds at ease. James did not write to criticize other sovereigns or sow the seeds of his religion abroad but to "warn Princes not to permit their authority to be touched, as the Pope was endeavoring to lay hands on crowns, sovereignties and temporal jurisdictions."²² Wotton again brought up the Gunpowder Plot and the ubiquitous Jesuits who never were far from his mind. He quickly went through the history of the work, admitting that the king was stung by the Bellarmine-Torti critique and forced to reply to the cardinal as well as to the English Jesuit, Robert Parsons, who was nonsensically identified as one of the conspirators who planned to blow up king and Parliament.²³ He fell to using labored similes such as comparing the harmless channeling of papal power to the construction of canals to prevent the overflow of the Tiber which the pope had discussed with a special commission. Like a dignified old oracle, the doge replied that the Premonition obviously was a reflection of the king's ability to defend temporal jurisdiction as it affected all sovereigns: "...we receive the book...as a fresh sign of his Majesty's kindly

²²Ibid., 11: 304.

²³Parsons' barbs were perhaps the hardest of all for James to take because this Jesuit was a true-born Englishman. It was with difficulty that the king was restrained from answering Parsons' rejoinder to the Oath of Allegiance, The Judgement of a Catholicke English-Man Living in Banishment For His Religion published in Rome in 1608.

disposition toward the Republic."²⁴ As the Senate had resolved, James' intemperate volume was locked up but this was only the beginning of the controversy.

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²⁴CSPV, 11: 306.

Early in August, Marc Antonio Correr, successor in London to Zorzi Giustinian, made a discovery which possibly was to save Wotton's diplomatic career. Correr truthfully informed his government that a quantity of suspicious books was left in his house by a priest who had served the French ambassador before that diplomat returned home. The Venetian gentleman was appalled to discover that they were copies of the scurrilous work called Pruritanus which dragged the reputations of both the Tudors and the Stuarts in the mud by lifting scriptural passages and using them out of context. Some parts were even obscene. Correr was in a terrible position. Steadily, the supply dwindled as copies were sold to the London Catholic community. Word began to circulate at court that some of the ambassador's servants were responsible for passing the book around the city. Unwilling to wait for the ax to fall, he went to see both James and Salisbury who reassured him of their continued regard. Through a diligent search, the envoy was able to track down some seven hundred copies and hand them over to Cecil. Correr's efficient work did not go unnoticed as he was congratulated by the Council; his government was proudly informed that no other ambassador would receive such consideration under the circumstances.²⁵

²⁵Ibid., 11: 311. When the glare of publicity fell on Correr, Wotton was spared the full consequences of his foolish conduct, namely forced retirement.

After presenting the king's book, Wotton was as satisfied as a man stretched out before a roaring log fire in the dead of winter. No other envoy had attained the quality of his performance before the Venetian establishment. Then he received word that the Inquisition had banned the Premonition and ordered all copies seized. After he had regained his composure, Wotton, as he said "researched the matter to the bottom" and found that the papal nuncio, in the temporary absence of the doge, had come down to the Collegio to press quietly for the prohibition which was granted.²⁶ When he too came before the Collegio towards the end of August, 1609, he already had word from Salisbury on Correr's discomfort and contrasted the considerate treatment given the Republic's ambassador with that accorded his sovereign's writings. For full effect, he wondered aloud how an insignificant friar in

²⁶Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 469. An interesting sidelight to this was Wotton's admission to Salisbury that the Collegio was the "most superstitious member of the State" meaning the most devoted to the Roman faith. This little slip of the pen says quite a lot since the usual picture shows a victorious Venice gloating and hovering over the prostrate body of the Papacy in the wake of the Interdict. Wotton also reluctantly admitted that the papal nuncio, Gessi, was a warmhearted gentle priest who was repairing much of the damage inflicted by extremists on both sides. The nuncio also let it be known that the King of England's reputation should not be harmed. His name was not to be mentioned as the author and even the order to the Prior of the Guild of Booksellers was given verbally so that no written evidence would be preserved. See CSPV, 11: 308, 328.

the office of the Inquisition could presume to ban a king's book. This was nothing more than a transparent verbal game. Wotton and his hearers both knew that the Venetian government was behind the entire episode. James' good servant asked for satisfaction but after a two-week wait had heard nothing one way or the other, so he demanded another audience in which he went too far, compromising both his own and his country's honor.

Playing the wounded suitor, he blurted out that a plain unadorned refusal of the king's work would have been preferable to insult.²⁷ Again Wotton was told that the greatest care was taken to keep James' name out of it and that specific instructions were sent to officials at the University of Padua to ban circulation of Pruritanus. Foolishly, Wotton was not satisfied with this answer, accusing the Venetians of halfheartedness when it came to the interests of a firm ally. In reply, they said that the action was taken by the Inquisition not to injure the royal name but to safeguard Catholicism. Once James understood the circumstances, the Venetian leadership felt that their explanation would be fully acceptable. Only a day later, the never-satisfied envoy was called in to hear the Senate's resolution on the same issue and it varied not an iota from the Collegio's. Wotton brushed

²⁷Ibid., 11: 321-24.

the latest resolve aside and pulled some more particulars from under his hat. How could the government be sincere in its friendship if it allowed the Bellarmine-Torti book to be read freely in Venice. Also banned was the Basilikon Doron which no one could call offensive yet a book contrary to public morals with instructions in witchcraft was on booksellers' shelves. Useless sparring like this only overheated the chamber and diminished Wotton's reputation as a responsible public official. On the spot, he resigned his position in a huff: "Your Excellencies are not to reckon me an accredited envoy, but a poor gentleman until his Majesty's pleasure be known."²⁸

Although Wotton's actions were ludicrous, the Venetians took the breakdown in relations so seriously that a special messenger was sent galloping across Europe to instruct Correr in London that James must hear their version of the dispute before Wotton's tale of woe reached Salisbury.²⁹ After a

²⁸Ibid., 11: 339. Contrary to what Pearsall Smith says, the presentation of the book and Wotton's outrage at his treatment were important events and not occasions of high comedy. Wotton rightly perceived the ceremony as a test of his majesty's prestige in a country that owed James much for his support during the break with Rome. Even though other courts were more important diplomatic posts, Venice was the only place James had scored a victory and had built up a modicum of prestige so necessary to his ego.

²⁹CSPV, 11: 340; Wotton's overzealous action was remarked upon in London. See Sir Ralph Winwood, Memorials of Affairs of State Collected From the Original Papers of Sir Ralph Winwood, ed. Edward Sawyer, 3 vols. (London, 1725), 3: 77-78.

period of sulking, the self-deposed envoy returned to congratulate the doge on his recovery from illness and half apologized for his rashness in resigning without royal leave. Ironically, Dona's absence probably was a contributing factor in Wotton's wrongheaded decision. He felt torn between two ideals: his personal regard for the doge and the Republic and duty to the king. His favorite whipping-boys, the Jesuits, took the place of the pope as the evil geniuses behind the banning of James' book. Given their deviousness, they were also behind the incident at the Venetian embassy in London. As for the resignation, the doge mildly reproved him saying that it would never be accepted until the king's permission was received.³⁰ Meanwhile, the official Venetian version reached Correr, and after much difficulty, the envoy tracked down the king while he was hunting and did his best to explain the imbroglio. To his relief, James gave him a sympathetic hearing and was genuinely moved when the ambassador concluded that the two nations' friendship was "not like a flower that in the morning is fair and full-colored but toward evening grows pale and droops" but rather "that it resembles marble of the closest grain which becomes ever finer with age."³¹ Calmly, James admitted that if the Venetians tried to

³⁰Ibid., 11: 343-44.

³¹Ibid., 11: 349.

circulate a book in England attacking the established church, he would not allow it. A quick note penned to Salisbury said that if Correr's account was accurate, then Wotton used "a little more fervent zeal than temperate wisdom."³² Cecil, who by this time was accustomed to Wotton's outbursts, minimized the business and told Correr that he hoped the Republic would not take great offense at an action that was spurred by passion rather than reason. Besides, no Englishman combined talent and a love of things Venetian like the eccentric scholar diplomat.³³ Wotton was fortunate to retain Salisbury's backing because he had no shortage of detractors at home or in Rome where the Venetian ambassador reported that the pope was glad to see that the Collegio had stood up to the petulant foreigner.³⁴

Venice, of course, was anxious to bury the entire issue. One of its leading political figures, Francesco Contarini, was sent to England to spread even more oil on the troubled waters and found that James was gratified that the Republic would go to such lengths to stay in his good graces. For his part, the king arranged a fine banquet where he could display his obvious affection for his Italian ally. James praised

³²Smith, Life and Letters, 1: 106.

³³CPSV, 11: 351.

³⁴Ibid., 11: 347.

Wotton's work, saying that if the envoy erred, it was on the side of devotion to his sovereign's cause which was the mark of true service.³⁵ However much this was the case, Wotton's persistent imbalance in dealing with the Roman problem was not helpful to the House of Stuart. James, despite his eagerness to cross swords with papal apologists, was still concerned to keep a line of communication open between himself and the pope. Since the principals were so sensitive, only a third party, in this case Henry IV's government, could be the contact. Having been on both sides of the religious fence, the perennially skeptical Henry was exasperated with both sides.³⁶ He thought the pope was far too rigorous in English affairs and could only hurt the Catholic cause in the Stuart realm. Originally, he had done his best to convince the Roman Curia to make no statement on the Oath of Allegiance. After the bloodied combatants had come off the field of conflict, Henry urged that the controversy be quietly laid to rest. Nevertheless, Pope Paul asked the weary Bellarmine to reply again and at first, even thought of sending the refutation to every Christian prince. Finally, to everyone's relief, this stubborn prelate saw that such action would enflame the issue

³⁵Ibid., 11: 430, 436.

³⁶Running the risk of angering his Bourbon "cousin," James had his book translated and printed in French. Henry, to good effect, banned it in his domains but at the same time also forbade Bellarmine's answers from circulating. See Pastor, History of the Popes, 26: 175.

even more and that any chance of bringing James over to Rome would be totally lost. In the future, he would seek Henry's advice before taking up the pen against the king.³⁷

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³⁷Ibid., 26: 176-77.

In May 1610, occurred one of the pivotal events of the early modern era, the murder of Henry IV by a demented friar named Ravallac. France was spared having its treasure squandered in a war with the Habsburgs but was plunged into a political crisis reminiscent of the 1560s when the religious wars began. A nine-year-old Louis XIII sat on the throne with his Italian-born mother, Marie de' Medici, becoming regent. Later that same month, Wotton came before the Collegio to express condolences to the Venetians who had valued Henry's friendship even if everything did not go their way all the time in dealing with the crafty Bourbon. Wotton was convinced that the assassination was inspired by the "new doctrine" preached by the Jesuits, "the fount of which is stained with blood as was the old Draconian code."³⁸ Since Henry favored the order, the ambassador would not have been so foolish as to charge them directly with the killing but he did believe them to be the instigators. Using a fine figure of speech, Wotton stated that he did not especially care about the assassin's confession; far more interesting was the identity of the confessor.

The Julich-Cleves imbroglio was now at a boil and Gontier, a well-known Parisian Jesuit preacher, continued to belabor the issue naturally defending what he considered the

³⁸CSPV., 11: 492.

Catholic interest. Extremism on the part of his opponents was a gift to an accomplished stand-up speaker like Wotton. Whatever the original words of the Jesuit, his paraphrase was more than effective: "Whoever draws his sword on behalf of the Protestant Princes...draws it to plunge into Christ's side."³⁹ So it could be deduced that whoever prevented the drawing of the sword was doing the service of Christ. Wotton was quick to point out that he did not consider this a Catholic but a Jesuitical doctrine, an intrusion into a purely civil case "as the Duke of Bavaria himself confesses."⁴⁰

Wotton then brought up the case of the Earl of Tyrone for comparison and how a certain Colonel Norris, who was attached to Essex's command, wanted to end the Irish nobleman's rebellion simply by offering a large reward to anyone who would kill Tyrone. This, said Wotton, "was a good, just and laudable plan" since the earl was so great a rebel but no matter how great the gold, no one would kill him. On the Continent, there were many who because of a "promised heavenly reward thought nothing of murdering a king."⁴¹ Wotton lamented the sorry state of Christendom where such doctrines could gain a hearing. If the ambassador were a more ruthless

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid., 11: 493.

⁴¹Ibid.

or perhaps a candid man, he would have seen Henry's removal as a positive boon to his own master who had been outfoxed on more than one occasion by the king of France. But back in Britain, the joy pouring forth from Madrid and Vienna was definitely lacking.

Marc Antonio Correr, the Venetian ambassador, reported that James was in a quandary about what to do to protect his person. Although the Stuart monarch disliked Henry, he admired his strength, intelligence and enormous influence. In Correr's opinion, there was a new dread of Catholics in England reinforced by the opinion that their Spanish protectors were behind the murder in Paris. The Venetian ambassador wrote his government that the Catholic community found itself in great confusion after the strengthening of the already stringent laws directed at them. James, he thought, would have liked to be rid entirely of the papists, as they were to his mind seething with thoughts of rebellion.⁴² But at the same time, the king was proceeding with the utmost caution lest he force his imagined adversaries into a corner with no avenue of escape.

Wotton's last year as ambassador was not as quiet as he had hoped. Julich-Cleves and the French king's death were major events on the European scene even though Venice was not

⁴²Ibid., 11: 496.

directly involved. Henry's departure stopped momentarily the anti-Habsburg policy that was moving from paper into action with French army columns. It was no secret that Marie de' Medici leaned toward Spain and wanted no break with Madrid. Wotton, who a few years later would be personally involved in the Netherlands, knew both the strategic and religious importance of the operation. His extensive travels had given him a feel for the issues even as his physical constitution did not endear him to northern European weather and diet. Julich and Cleves were the connecting link in the chain that led from the German Protestant rulers to the Dutch provinces. Marie would have liked to pull back the royal army but was reluctant to turn so quickly against her husband's plans. Peace-loving James, still shaken by his brother monarch's fate, allowed the English troops in the Dutch service to cooperate in the joint venture. Reached in mid July by the forces of the coalition, Julich fell on August 22 and was declared officially occupied until the question of legal "right" could be resolved.

As the Protestant Union was anxious to bind James to its cause, Prince Christian of Anhalt came to England in November 1610 to lobby personally in the group's behalf. Ambassador Correr reported that Christian urged the king to place himself at the head of the Union and take the princes under his protection. Obviously, French help could no longer be counted

on and there was no other ruler who could fill the position. James committed himself to nothing except peace and he wanted them to adopt a like policy as little could be expected from Denmark and Sweden.⁴³ One other major cause for James' reticence was his financial health which was always precarious. He was involved in a deep dispute with Parliament which included the failure of the "Great Contract" where James would give up some of his prerogative powers in exchange for a set subsidy. This hotbed of opposition to Stuart "despotism" was finally dissolved in February 1611.

In July 1610, it was already reliably reported by Ambassador Correr that Wotton's recall was assured. Actually, it was long overdue but he erred in thinking that Sir Henry would be sent to Spain, possibly the last place the Kentishman would wish to be posted.⁴⁴ In early September, he announced his recall before the doge and praised his successor, Sir Dudley Carleton, as a man of honor and ability. What Wotton did not realize was that Carleton was one of his detractors at court, who poked fun at him in letters to the notorious gossip, John Chamberlain, who also enjoyed firing barbs at Sir Henry. They even thought up a mock pseudonym "Fabritio" for a man who bore them not the slightest ill will and who always

⁴³CSPV., 12: 76.

⁴⁴Ibid., 12: 3.

thought highly of Carleton, both professionally and personally. Rather than quit his post immediately as was his right, Wotton waited until December so that he could meet Carleton face to face and introduce him to the doge.⁴⁵ In honor of the departing envoy, the Senate voted an appropriation of a thousand crowns for the gold chain customarily presented to ambassadors taking their leave. Little did he realize that this would be an extended leave of absence rather than a farewell.

* * *

⁴⁵Ibid., 12: 88-90.

After so many literary battles with the Papacy, James' plans to make advantageous marriage pacts for his children brought him again into close proximity with his adversary. Aside from the obvious prestige that an agreement with a Catholic state would bring, his image, after the death of Henry IV as the senior monarch and lay head of Christendom would be enhanced. But not least in James' calculations was his dream of a large dowry to relieve his ever-present debt which even an adept money manager like Salisbury could not keep under control. There still was a pro-Catholic party at Court headed by the Earl of Northampton and it urged the king to move forward with the plan as the only sure bulwark against Puritanism, an argument that could always get a hearing from James.⁴⁶ But the only way he could get an alliance was with papal consent, a very remote prospect. As far back as 1608, the king was trying to betroth his daughter, Elizabeth, to the son of Charles Emmanuel, the Duke of Savoy. To make this negotiation an even more interesting amalgam, the young man also happened to be a nephew of Philip III. Madrid did not seem to have any strong objection but the pope did and Paul vetoed it. Never one to give up where a large dowry was involved, James kept stoking the weak fire. Toward the end of 1610, negotiations were again in progress and they just

⁴⁶Gardiner, History of England, 2: 137-38.

happened to coincide with Wotton's departure from Venice.

Charles Emmanuel was in both an embarrassing and dangerous situation. A long-time half-willing ally of Spain, he threw over that relationship to join Henry IV's coalition only to see his new mentor killed. England seemed to be the only place of diplomatic refuge. He now offered both his son and one of his daughters to James if a dual marriage contract could be worked out. Since Wotton was virtually on the scene and scheduled to leave Italy for home, he either received word from Salisbury to proceed to Turin or an enthusiastic invitation from the duke himself. He arrived there in January, 1611, after having spent an unpleasant week in Spanish-dominated Milan. For three full heady days, he was wined and dined at a masked ball, taken for sledge rides on the sparkling new-fallen snow and kept as close as possible to the lovely princess intended for Prince Henry.⁴⁷ This magnificent treatment had the desired effect on the bedazzled diplomat who became a firm advocate of the marriage. Other proposals were in the air for Henry to marry either one of the two infantas of Spain or a sister of the Grand Duke of Tuscany but these did not directly concern Wotton.

Soon after his very cordial homecoming, the Kentishman had

⁴⁷CSPV, 12: 107-09.

to continue his work on the project by meeting the Count of Cartignana who had just been sent from Turin to convince James of the advantage of a double marriage. Even with the prodding of the two Wotton brothers, the king could not see the point of having his children tied to a single family in Italy. More to his advantage was a princess royal for his dynamic son, specifically Philip III's comely eldest daughter. Characteristically, he had been led on by the Spaniards who had no intention of allowing one of their national treasures to marry a heretic. James took the false offer of the younger daughter - still a little girl - as a personal affront especially since it seemed that her elder sister was being saved for the future king of France. Later in the year, Cartignana returned once again to ask for the hand of Princess Elizabeth for the Prince of Piedmont. As a matter of form, he was allowed to pay a call on her, cruelly inflating his hopes while the political decision that she marry the Elector Palatine had already been made.⁴⁸ Cartignana returned home disgusted but already James realized that relations with the Savoyards should not be allowed to deteriorate especially with the Spanish match being nothing more than a remote possibility. To keep up appearances, a grand mission, to be led by Wotton, was fitted out. Jewels, a superb decorated

⁴⁸Gardiner, History of England, 2: 139ff.

sword and ten magnificent riding horses were sent as gifts to placate a ruler whose good will was welcome but not vital to England's interest. It was the duke and not James who stood cold and shivering before his enemies.

If Wotton thought his first reception by the Savoyard establishment was royal, then this one was certainly imperial by comparison. The Venetian ambassador, Gussoni, reported with astonishment the banquets, official receptions and outpourings of good will in almost every town along the route.⁴⁹ As the official head of a large entourage, Wotton, with his tired shoulders and limited constitution, assumed the burden of responding to all of this. He came down with a fever and could not even meet the duke who, in a real reversal of protocol, had ridden out to greet him. Eventually getting back on his feet, Wotton was forced to go through this regimen for an entire month while realizing that it was next to impossible to complete the negotiations, given his contrary instructions. On the one hand, he was to work for a league to oppose the now rejuvenated Spain; on the other, he had to explain to the duke that the marriage could not take place without Madrid's approval. Amazingly, this last did not faze Wotton's host as he was determined to find a way out of the thicket. Knowing James well enough, a generous dowry

⁴⁹CSPV, 12: 354-55.

could overwhelm any obstacle, or so the Savoyard ruler thought.

While Wotton was still trying to carve out an agreement, his nephew, Albert Morton, was sent back to England accompanied by a ducal agent bearing a miniature of the fairy tale princess for Prince Henry's approval. Charles Emmanuel said that papal or Spanish approval was of no consequence as he was a sovereign ruler who could arrange his daughter's marriage in any manner he desired.⁵⁰ Wotton left Turin on June 15 a much wealthier man than the one who entered. Much of the "booty" was spent in Milan, Basel and larger centers in the Rhineland as he and his suite of young gentlemen made their way home in leisurely fashion. At this point, the talented son of a publicity-shy Kentish squire was a world away from the poor young scholar who had travelled these same roads and rivers twenty years before. Returning to Britain, he was at the pinnacle, the most accomplished diplomat in the royal service. Certainly, no one else could have a better working relationship with the king than the witty urbane world traveller who was also a pretty fair amateur theologian, or better, Erasmian intellectual. Armed with full portraits of the duke and his lovely daughter, Wotton joyfully met James who praised the beauty of the Infanta Maria. Then the

⁵⁰Ibid., 12: 388.

ambassador had an audience with one of his favorite correspondents, Prince Henry, who likewise was attracted to the enchanting girl. In addition, Henry was drawn as a son toward the duke who was a spirited warlike man so different from the prince's timid father.⁵¹

All the colorful negotiations would bear fruit or wither on the vine over the amount of the dowry, 700,000 crowns. But whatever enthusiasm the fickle James mustered for the proposed match cooled quickly as the French dangled a possible marriage treaty before his glazed eyes. How could any arrangement with an Italian principality come up to that with the ancient kingdom of France? On the smooth advice of the Duke de Bouillon, Maria de' Medici offered to hand over her six-year-old daughter Christina for a complete assuredly Protestant upbringing on English soil in order to call Prince Henry her son-in-law.⁵² But this is a world of uncertainty. By the autumn of 1612, the brave young knight was on his deathbed and finally succumbed in early November. Wotton too, entered the valley of trials.

For Wotton, arriving from Turin, the road to advancement seemed evident despite his obvious excesses and theatrical posturing. Now in his early forties, he felt he could call upon faithful friends--even Prince Henry--to aid in his quest

⁵¹Ibid., 12: 408, 427.

⁵²Gardiner, History of England, 2: 154ff.

for higher office. When Salisbury became gravely ill, it was anticipated that he would secure a Secretaryship of State, despite numerous candidates for what was know as the "bear's skin." Unfortunately, a few weeks after Salisbury temporarily regained his health, Wotton had to leave for Turin again to handle the negotiations, and when Salisbury suddenly collapsed and died on May 24, 1612, Sir Henry was still in Italy. But those on the scene still thought that his chances were excellent as Cecil himself, before his death, had probably advised James to appoint Wotton. The queen and the Prince of Wales were lobbying for him as was his brother, Lord Wotton, a member of the Privy Council. Chamberlain, the gossip, wrote on June 11, "in the multitude of competition for the secretaryship...the most voices run with Sir Henry Neville, Sir Thomas Lake and Sir Henry Wotton, and great means and measures made for the last;" on June 17, "the likeliest now in the world's eye for the secretaryship...is Sir Henry Wotton."⁵³

But by the time he came home from the second mission, his star was in the descendant. The roundly hated Rochester, the king's favorite, persuaded James to handle diplomatic correspondence on his own, one of the worst pieces of advice

⁵³John Chamberlain, The Letters of John Chamberlain, ed. N.E. McClure, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1939), I: 355, 359, 363.

ever given him, but understandable considering the source. Others thought that Sir Ralph Winwood, the ambassador at The Hague, would get the post as he did eventually. The final blow came with the death of Prince Henry. Wotton fell into complete if temporary disfavor with the king over a simple literary faux pas he had committed almost a decade before.⁵⁴ Although soon forgiven by the indulgent James, Wotton never again was seriously considered for higher office.

⁵⁴On his way to Venice to assume his duties as ambassador, Wotton had stopped in Augsburg at the home of a friend and had written what he thought was a pun as indeed it was in English: "An ambassador is an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country." Unfortunately, Sir Henry wrote in the guest book in Latin "Legatus est Vir bonus, peregre missus mentiendum Reipublicae causa" which was bandied about all over learned Europe, for even Father Possevino mentions it in his account of his dealings with Wotton who almost certainly was not the source of his information. James probably would never have heard it in England had it not been included in a book attacking one of his controversial works, the Apologia.

AFTERWORD

Wotton was now in his forty-fourth year, for the time, advanced middle age. He had seen many of his contemporaries go to their graves, even some whose names still live today. So he could be forgiven the thought that his best years were behind him, that the chances of serving the Crown in a higher capacity were almost non-existent. Indeed, this smacks of the truth at least in part. No assignment that he would receive in the future would match in interest the first tour of duty in Venice. Ironically, Wotton's life seemed to parallel that of his sovereign. Being friends as close as difference in stations would allow, both men seemed to stagnate from this time forward, James more markedly than Wotton. Sir Henry's career eased along on a monotonous plane from involvement in the incredibly tangled Julich-Cleves controversy to a pair of engagements in his beloved Venice before stretching out in long semi-retirement as Provost of Eton, to fish peacefully with Izaak Walton and to counsel the young John Milton.

This is not to imply that Wotton was an unfulfilled man. He never felt destiny's call as had Sir Walter Raleigh or Sir Francis Bacon. Sir Henry could never be considered a tragic figure even if his industry had approached that of the other men. As a fourth son in a rigid hierarchical society, his chances of preferment were not good and yet he came within a

hair of occupying a chair reserved for the mighty. But fate can be an unpredictable lady. Wotton was accused in his own time of not being sufficiently English. It was said that his long service abroad had actually made him appear foreign in the eyes of his own people. It is possible that his former connection with the Essex faction was still held against him but his friendship with the powerful Robert Cecil would counter this opposition. Certainly, his loyalty was never questioned, not even by those who sought to defame him.

Was Wotton a successful diplomat? If defense of his sovereign's name and dignity is the criterion, then the ambassador's service ranged from adequate to quaint to infantile. If the nurturing of his nation's interest (outside the person of the monarch) is the standard, then the evaluation would be a very mixed bag. Wotton let his personal feelings overwhelm him during the Interdict crisis. His intemperance and unwarranted promises gained less for King James than was the monarch's due. As a representative of a major power, he should have had a greater realization of the effects of his actions on his master's prestige vis a vis other crowned heads. His tendency to pursue impractical schemes for religious reform interfered with the attempt of his superior, Lord Salisbury, to steer a well thought out course through the diplomatic shoals. No less devoted to his faith but more hardheaded, Sir Ralph Winwood, in the difficult

post at The Hague, would today be considered the more effective diplomat.

In conclusion, it must be admitted that the Kentishman's unbounded zeal and inability to temper his idealism with an appreciation for circumstance have disqualified him from taking his place on the role of major figures before the English Civil War. One of the finest evaluations of Sir Henry comes from the pen of Archbishop David Mathew:

"In many respects he was the ideal representative of a friendly power. He was, however, at times too sensitive for contentment, and he was aware that his connections in England were not strong enough to be subjected to great strain. This he was at pains to avoid, and his correspondence was perhaps too careful in its sincere parade of friendship. His fantasy seems, as in the case of so many Englishmen, to have received encouragement from his profound assurance in the company of foreigners. His knowledge of Italian was very perfect. Verse and conversation and the domesticities of the rich all came to him as though by nature. No Englishman in his generation had a clearer appreciation of those means by which his countrymen gained some knowledge of their Europe than Sir Henry Wotton..."

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The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

4. 15. 83.

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