

Philip II Versus William Cecil: The Cleaving of Christendom

by WARREN H. CARROLL

History is always a field of controversy, especially between those who recognize Christ as history's Lord and those who do not. The mission of the Church in history is, of course, to help all men draw closer to their Lord. Therefore, the high dramas of history always involve the success or failure of the Church's apostolate, and the success or failure of those who seek to make that apostolate either easier or more difficult. Few historical conflicts have more to do with such concerns than that between Philip II of Spain and William Cecil of England. Nothing less than the fate of the Church's mission in Northern Europe hung in the balance. In the following thorough study, Warren H. Carroll paints the antagonists in rich colors, reveals the points at issue, and describes the outcome in terms no less relevant in the twentieth century than they were in the sixteenth. The author also provides a valuable lesson in the trauma and devastation of Christian disunity.

Hindsight is one of the greatest obstacles to a true understanding of history. There is a natural tendency to look upon the way things actually happened as the way they must have happened, as an inescapable consequence of the trends and forces at work. Even among those who would indignantly reject the designation of historical determinist, the effects of hindsight create a sort of constant bias in favor of the inevitability of the historical events we know to have taken place.

But we can never understand how men thought and decided and acted in the real world of their time if we always treat them as though they might have known or should have known how all the great enterprises of their time were going to turn out. For history is not predetermined, and every attempt to prove otherwise by predicting it comprehensively (without a direct prophetic revelation from God), no matter how erudite and brilliant, has ended in failure so total that it must be called ludicrous. Yet to the secular thinker it must always seem that if only he could know enough about men and their circumstances, history would become predictable.

The Christian who has meditated upon the application of his faith to history knows better. He knows that history is more than men and events; it is the interface of the temporal with the eternal; its actors are beings divinely constituted with an immortal destiny, and consequently there are other actors on the stage with them who do not keep records or hold councils that come within the historian's purview – the hosts of Heaven and of Hell.

So the shaping of great historical events is ultimately encompassed in that mystery which veils the Godhead from our sight in this time-bound existence, and we cannot rightly claim to say what *must* have been, or why. But we can say, not only what was, but what *might*, in the mercy of God, have been; for nothing on earth is beyond the reach of His power. Yet it is part of this supernal mystery that God gives human beings, His creatures, the latitude seemingly to frustrate His will under many circumstances – even as He allowed them to crucify Him incarnate as a man.

Just as one man's personal moral choice may have eternal consequences, so may the public decisions of one man or a few men at a critical moment in history, especially when those decisions reflect a lifetime commitment directly pertaining to the central and eternal truths of human existence.

For these reasons it is both possible and enlightening to view the history of the second half of the sixteenth century, during which the division of Christendom into Catholic and Protestant parts became established so firmly as to appear to be beyond healing as far ahead as men could see or imagine,¹ from the standpoint of two men of great power who very early in life made commitments to the opposing sides from which they never wavered in the course of a long lifetime: King Philip II of Spain and Sir William Cecil, later Lord Burghley, first minister of Queen Elizabeth I. Upon the outcome of their titanic combat,

whose full dimensions history is still revealing, depended the historical character and prospects of Christendom from their day to this. The outcome was not inevitable. Either man could have won, and with him, his cause. The man who won was Cecil. But it need not have been; and for the Catholic, knowing that the last triumph belongs to Christ, no victory of an enemy of Christ's Church is permanent.

From the Christian view of history – Catholic or Protestant – there can be little doubt or question that the cleaving of the Christian world during the sixteenth century is the most important event of the modern age. For the believing Protestant, indeed, the sixteenth century becomes in a very real sense the beginning of Christian history, or at least its second beginning; for wherever his particular belief places what he regards as the apostasy of the existing church, it was a very long time before the sixteenth century; and if the alleged departing from Christ is dated to the Emperor Constantine (perhaps the most usual, or at least the mean of Protestant interpretations) then before Luther there are only the Apostles and the early martyrs and a handful of putative Protestant forerunners. And for the believing Catholic, the sundering of Europe at the very moment when its Christian culture was bursting forth to spread over and transform the entire world is a gigantic tragedy whose manifold evil effects have swept through history ever since, leading directly, by breaching Christendom's defenses, to modern secularism.²

The great moments in Christian history, for good or ill, are always high drama. This may embarrass the pedantic historian, but there is no help for it, since along with all His greater attributes Christ is the supreme dramatist; the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection are the supreme drama; hence all events in which His mission is intimately involved must share to some degree that divinely dramatic quality. Therefore the sixteenth century, in keeping with the magnitude of its importance in the Christian order, is by almost any standard the most dramatic period in the history of Europe. It is no accident that the age of Philip II and William Cecil was also the age of William Shakespeare.

And the drama grows with our knowledge of it, rightly apprehended. In truly Shakespearian fashion, the principal actors were not fully aware for a long time whom they were contending with. Philip and Cecil knew perfectly well what they were contending *for*; but from all the evidence it appears that for more than twenty years neither appreciated the full extent to which the other was his chief antagonist. Misled too often by false reports, underestimating the character and commitment of the other, distracted by lesser men and events which seemed critically important at the moment, neither knew for decades whose hand it was that had most often opposed or frustrated his most careful designs, whose will it was in the world that ever remained most undeviatingly opposed to his own. Each thought the other motivated primarily by considerations of power politics and national interest, and certainly these motivations were not absent; but as we shall see, they were not primary. Each for long saw in poor tortured and riven France their chief potential temporal enemy. Only gradually did they begin to realize that the religious wars which kept France prostrate were more than anything else a reflection and a result of their own struggle for the unification or the dividing of Christendom, that the fate of Paris was in a very real sense being decided in Madrid and in London.

CECIL

Cecil had finally grasped the full truth by the time the Spanish Armada, on a truly quixotic mission against almost all considerations of military and conventional political wisdom,³ stood up the English Channel 130 strong in the summer of 1588; but by all indications, Philip himself never knew and hardly guessed. In earlier years he had remarked from time to time that Cecil could be persuaded, or that Cecil could be bribed; two years before the Armada sailed, he thought that Cecil at 66 was too old to matter any longer.⁴ But Cecil lived ten more years, his mind and purpose unchanged and undimmed to the end, dying in 1598, in one of history's most astonishing coincidences (although in such matters a Christian cannot always assume mere coincidence) within forty days of the death of his great antagonist. Cecil remained unpersuadable, unbribeable to the end; the Catholic Church has never known a more relentless – or more successful – human foe.

He covered his tracks well. His correspondence and state papers, voluminous though they are, reveal remarkably little about the most important questions, about the motivations of the man and his ultimate goals.⁵ His pen was as guarded as his tongue. For William Cecil was not the kind of man who proclaims his purposes from the housetops, who exhorts and inspires others to heroic deeds. Philip, for all his reputation for solemnity and prudence, was such a man; but Cecil worked quietly, often in the dark, and much that he did will never be known to history. All his life Cecil insisted that his sole desire was to serve his Queen well, and for forty years of his life that Queen was Elizabeth. But for five years before the reign of Elizabeth his Queen was Mary Tudor, and for four of those years she was Philip's wife: his great antagonist was the consort of his royal mistress. If Cecil's sole creed was to serve his legitimate sovereign, what was he doing then?

Outwardly, he was conforming. Though a foe of the Pope and the Catholic priesthood at least from his college days at Cambridge,⁶ during the reign of Queen Mary Cecil attended Mass, received Easter communion,⁷ asked for a dispensation from the Lenten fast, and made great show with a large clattering set of Rosary beads and a Catholic breviary.⁸ Moreover, he was one of three escorts chosen to bring Cardinal Reginald Pole from Brussels to England where, as Archbishop of Canterbury, he was to restore the Catholic Church in England.⁹ It was while Cecil was on this mission – which even his very friendly biographer Conyers Read calls “a strange paradox”¹⁰ – that Philip II addressed the Parliament of England on November 12, 1554 in a speech that summed up the cause to which he had dedicated his life:

Your ancestors lived and died in the profession of the Catholic religion, and in obedience to the Roman Church, that Christian brotherhood whose multitude are joined as witnesses of the name of Jesus Christ in unity of Faith, legitimately ordained, which unites the people to the priest as the flock of sheep to the shepherd. This, according to the evidence of the New Testament, is our Catholic Church, which had its origin in Jerusalem, and scattered through the world, increased, glorious and manifest, mingling the good and the bad, holy in faith and sacraments, of apostolic origin and succession, with catholic amplitude, one by union of its members, of perpetual duration, and governed as elect by the Holy Spirit. . . .

The temporal government is not fit for divinity, like the divine worship and the keeping of the heavenly precepts, which make the being and power of the king participants . . . of the being and power of God; and he, to sustain it worthily, asks favor of Heaven, and to keep it obeys the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Roman Pontiff. Of the king's ruling function and office the only end is not majesty, wealth and dominion; but rather God and His holy law, and the accomplishment of his precepts, dying for it if necessary.

The mercy of God now calls you to return, through obedience to the Roman Pontiff, to the flock of Jesus Christ, incorporating yourselves in His Catholic Church.¹¹

For all his beads and breviary, there is not the slightest evidence that Cecil ever sincerely followed his mistress and her royal consort by honoring this most solemn request of theirs, except in the merest empty externals. He kept closely in touch with the vehemently Protestant English exiles on the Continent, who hated Mary, for one of their leaders was his own father-in-law Sir Antony Cooke;¹² and the principal modern historian of these exiles has given it as his opinion that Cecil organized them as a party to undo the work of his Catholic Queen.¹³

This conclusion has been harshly challenged by contemporary scholars because there is no specific documentary evidence to support it,¹⁴ and indeed there is a very curious paucity of official documentary evidence on all activities in the government of England during the reign of Mary Tudor. For the critical year 1555, for example – the year of the executions for which Foxe's infamous *Book of Martyrs* has given Mary her nickname of *Bloody* – the English Public Record Office contains 334 Venetian documents, 255 Spanish, but only 141 domestic. For the first six months of Mary's reign there remain only 25 English domestic documents compared with 187 for the first six months of Elizabeth's reign. For the entire month of July 1555 there are just seven documents, of which four are bills and accounts of Cecil, and for November 1557 there are only four documents, two being Christmas invitations to Cecil. Since Cecil was far from prominent in the government under Queen Mary – she had very wisely

removed him from the royal council on her accession to the throne – it is hard to imagine why his personal documents should occupy so large a percentage of the official records of her reign, on any thesis other than that of Hugh Ross Williamson, who suggests that what we have is the remnant left after a thorough purge of the records by Cecil when he became Elizabeth's Secretary of State within three days of Queen Mary's death.¹⁵ Presumably, such a purge would only have been necessary if there had been some very important evidence to conceal, evidence which might have extended to treason against a Catholic Queen contrasting with service to a Protestant Queen.

But this is supposition. On the record, Cecil's emergence as a dominant figure comes immediately after Elizabeth's accession, when she appointed him Principal Secretary and Privy Councillor on November 20, 1558. Mary was buried December 14; on Christmas Day, Elizabeth ordered the Bishop of Carlisle, celebrant of the Christmas Mass for the royal court, not to elevate the Blessed Sacrament after the consecration; he refused to comply with her order, and she left the church after the reading of the gospel. Her coronation was January 15, 1559; at first the bishops, knowing her intentions regarding the Mass and the Catholic Church, refused to crown her, but then the Bishop of Carlisle gave way and agreed, though the "celebrant" at the coronation service was a married Protestant and once again the Blessed Sacrament was not elevated.¹⁶

When the Spanish ambassador went to see Elizabeth about the changes in the Mass, she referred him to Cecil. The ambassador then wrote to Philip II on January 31 that "the members of the Council who are foremost in upsetting things are Cecil and the Earl of Bedford."¹⁷ Years later, Cecil's usual tight-reined caution and circumspection in correspondence was allowed to slip for just an instant, in a letter to that strong Protestant Nicholas Throgmorton specifically referring to the Spanish ambassador's having called Cecil principally responsible for the change in religion in England. It is perhaps the most revealing sentence ever to come from Cecil's guarded pen, in rather heavy-handed jest though it was: "I must confess that I am thereof guilty but not thereby at fault and thereto I will stand as long as I shall live."¹⁸

Nothing here about sole and simple service to a legitimate monarch; nothing here, even more significantly, about the truth of Protestant theology and ecclesiology, or the spiritual qualities of Protestant sermons and church services. Cecil has remarkably little to say about Protestant doctrine, at any point in his life. He speaks often of God's Providence, as was the fashion of the age, but very rarely of Christ; as his comment to Throgmorton reveals, it was simply and solely the break with Rome that he was proud of, the division of the Church in which he found satisfaction, and which it was his life's work to maintain and extend.

By May 1559, with Mary Tudor not six months in her grave, the break was complete. Parliament under Cecil's prodding had passed, and Elizabeth had signed, the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity which abolished the Mass in England, rejected all authority in the Pope, and declared Queen Elizabeth sole "Governess" of the Church in England. The English nation was thenceforth set by the full force of its law in both schism and heresy (for, despite the claims of modern High Anglicans, there is conclusive evidence that both the sacrificial character of the Mass and the Real Presence of Christ in the consecrated Host were denied by nearly all the architects of the Elizabethan Church).¹⁹ Cecil and his mistress had made a decision from which there was no retreat, save in a repentance which would have required a truly heroic degree of sanctity; and in Cecil's case there is not a particle of evidence that he ever regretted what he had done.

With Elizabeth it is otherwise; Hilaire Belloc and other Catholic writers make a persuasive case that all her life she was unhappy in her new religion, and it is known that on her deathbed she drove the Archbishop of Canterbury from her chamber crying that he was "only a hedge-priest," and met her end in terrible loneliness and fear.²⁰ From this it does not necessarily follow, as some of these same Catholic historians have alleged, that Cecil dominated Elizabeth absolutely throughout her reign. She was a strong-willed, impetuous and inconstant woman with a vivid sense of her royal prerogative, and hated to feel that she was being manipulated. On many occasions she bluntly rejected Cecil's advice. But since she had no clear-cut policy of her own, and he had, and since (except on two brief though significant occasions) he was never out of her favor as long as he lived, he was in a position to exercise that continuing domination of events on which every Spanish ambassador in London commented right up to the Armada year.²¹

PHILIP

As for Philip II, on October 25, 1555 his father Charles V, the world's most powerful monarch, had passed on to him the government of the Netherlands, long vested in the House of Burgandy from which Charles' father the first Philip had come; and on the following January 16 Charles also abdicated to Philip as King of Spain, and retired for prayer and penance, in preparation for death, at the Spanish monastery of Yuste. The scene in Brussels, when Charles gave over to his son the rule of the Low Countries, was one of the most moving in European history. Philip must often have remembered it during the long struggle to hold the Netherlands for Catholic Christendom that filled the last thirty years of his reign, and raged on at his death with no end in sight. Said Charles:

I have gone nine times to Germany, six to Spain, seven to Italy, and I have come ten times here, to Flanders; I have traveled, in war and in peace, four times to France, twice to England, and twice again to Africa; making in all forty expeditions, without counting the shorter journeys I have accomplished to visit my different countries. I have journeyed eight times upon the Mediterranean, three times on the Ocean, and this will be the fourth, when I return to Spain to find my sepulchre. . . . I leave my son in my place, and commend him to you. Render to him the love and obedience which you have already shown towards me; preserve zealously that union among yourselves that you have never abandoned; sustain and maintain justice. Above all, do not permit the heresies which surround you to penetrate these lands, and if any such there are let them be rooted out.²²

And finally, speaking directly to Philip: "My son, always honor religion; keep the Catholic Faith in all its purity; respect the laws of the country as sacred and inviolable, and never attempt to trespass on the rights and privileges of your subjects."²³

Of Philip's total dedication to the Catholic Faith there has never been the faintest shadow of a doubt. The whole character of his world-famous monastery-palace, San Lorenzo de El Escorial, from which he ruled a vast empire from a simple chair under a tapestry of the crucified Christ, where he slept in a tiny room overlooking the high altar of the basilica he built, where he died offering up his agony in union with the sufferings of Christ, as he listened again and again to the reading of the Passion from the Gospels,²⁴ bears incontrovertible testimony to that fact. Philip has been called, in his own time and since, insufficiently subordinate to the Pope's ecclesiastical authority, and there is considerable substance to this claim; but the differences between Philip and the Holy See never touched on doctrine, nor the Pope's authority as a general proposition. Indeed, Philip's unstinting and active support was indispensable in making it possible to hold the final session of the Council of Trent and in promulgating its decrees throughout Christendom.²⁵

In January of 1560 Philip married Princess Isabel of France, to cement a peace between France and Spain, and thus was brought into close and constant contact with the desperate struggle just then beginning over whether France should remain Catholic. In March 1560 came the shadowy plot known as the Conspiracy or Tumult of Amboise, in which certain Huguenots attempted to kidnap the young King of France, Francis II, but of which the full ramifications were never clearly known. The French ambassador in Spain, Bishop l'Aubespine of Limoges, told Philip that though this particular thrust had been aimed only at the King of France, the long-range purpose of the conspirators was the destruction of the whole Catholic order in Europe, and that one of its architects had been Nicholas Throgmorton, the English ambassador to France who was William Cecil's "chief confidant" at this period.²⁶ Throgmorton denied the charge, and no one has ever been able to prove it conclusively; but it is given at least a considerable degree of verisimilitude by Cecil's own letter to Throgmorton less than a year later, just after the sudden death of Francis II in December 1560: "In any wise are those Protestants who in fearful times were so busy with their pen and weapons to be now forward, for surely courage will abash the Papists. . . . Now is the time for Calvin and all such noble men as have fetched their knowledge from thence to impugn and suppress the tyranny of the Papists."²⁷ Cecil's biographer Read thinks this meant only a propaganda campaign.²⁸ Then why the very specific reference to *weapons*?

At all events, the Huguenots were indeed “forward” with both “pen and weapons;” before the end of 1561 France was swept by a wave of diabolical anti-Catholic atrocities. Churches were devastated, nuns and priests were scourged and killed, the tombs of saints were violated. At Montpellier the Huguenots sacked 60 churches and convents and killed 150 priests and monks. The famous monastery of Cluny, from which had come the great reform of the Church in the tenth and eleventh centuries, was looted. All that remained of two of France’s most famous saints, Irenaeus of Lyons and Martin of Tours, was thrown into the Loire River; the incorrupt body of St. Francis of Paola, who had comforted King Louis XI of France on his deathbed in 1482, was taken from its tomb at Plessis-les-Tours, dragged through the streets and burned. These atrocities, amply documented, have been blandly ignored by all but strongly Catholic historians, though their impact on France at the time was obviously enormous and was the immediate cause of the French Wars of Religion.²⁹

Philip sent money and seven thousand soldiers to help Catherine de Medici, for long the effective ruler of France due to the incompetence of her young sons Charles and Henry, restore order and save the Faith in France.³⁰ Under these circumstances he was able to help persuade her not to withhold support from the Council of Trent and hold instead a purely national council, as she had been hard pressed by her advisors to do.³¹ But Cecil frustrated the Pope’s attempt to induce England to send representatives to the Council of Trent. Elizabeth had originally favored the admission of the papal nuncio Martinengo to England to discuss the Council, but Cecil stirred up anti-Catholic sentiment by a series of arrests and alarms which he described as follows:

When I saw this Romish influence towards, about one month past, I thought it necessary to dull the papists’ expectations by discovering of certain mass-mongers and punishing of them, as I do not doubt but you have heard of them. I take God to record that I meant no evil to any of them, but only for the rebating of the Papists’ humours which, by the Queen’s Majesty’s lenity, grew too rank. I find it hath done much good.³²

The “mass-mongers” were at least more fortunate than Edmund Campion and the other English martyrs of the 1580’s whose condemnation and execution Cecil personally supervised,³³ but the public excitement over their arrest was used as a basis for declaring any support for receiving the Pope’s emissary “treason.” It was a decisive stroke, all the more significant because it was taken during one of the two brief periods of Elizabeth’s reign when Cecil was out of favor, for opposing her prospective marriage with Robert Dudley, later Earl of Leicester. Knowing Cecil’s power, Dudley had gone to Philip’s ambassador to ask for Spanish support. Philip promised to help only if Elizabeth would allow the Mass again in England, release the imprisoned English Catholic bishops, send some of them to the Council of Trent and then abide by its decrees.³⁴ The latter two conditions show how strongly Philip was supporting the Council. It was this plan that Cecil frustrated, yet it does not appear that Philip ever realized what went wrong or who was responsible. For another quarter of a century Philip still hoped to influence policy in England, though because of Cecil he never again had a realistic chance of doing so, while Cecil seems to have regarded Philip as just another royal politician, albeit a very powerful one, whose interests were exclusively national and personal.

THE LOW COUNTRIES

In the year 1566 the horror that had ravaged France came to the Low Countries. With all the ink that has been spilled over the “tyranny of Alva,” Philip’s heavy taxation of the Dutch traders, and the “establishment of the Inquisition in the Netherlands” (which, contrary to legend, was established not by Philip but by his father Charles, though Philip certainly supported it vigorously), it is curious how lightly most histories pass over the immediate cause of the devastating war that was to last (though with some truces) a full eighty years, the kind of war against which Charles V had so solemnly warned in his abdication statement in Brussels in 1555. Philip sent the Duke of Alva, his best soldier and one of his

most ruthless, to the Netherlands precisely and solely because of what happened during August and September 1566 in Antwerp and throughout the Low Countries, as the record of his decisive meeting with his council in October of that year makes unmistakably clear.³⁵

On August 16 the great cathedral of Antwerp was gutted by a Calvinist mob. They began by smashing the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary that had been carried in solemn procession the preceding Sunday; they chopped off the heads of statues of Christ with axes and transfixed other images and pictures of Christ with swords; they assaulted a great old crucifix, which displayed the two thieves between whom Christ was crucified, leaving untouched the statues of the thieves, but hacking the form of Christ to pieces. They smashed stained glass windows and the great organ, and stole and defiled the vessels and plate. From Antwerp the destruction spread all over the Low Countries, until in the incredibly short time of six weeks the churches in more than four hundred towns and villages had been sacked. In Antwerp alone more than 25 churches were devastated in the one terrible night of August 16-17. By all accounts the number of men responsible was very small, little more than a hundred; but not a finger was raised to stop them in Antwerp or in most of the other towns where they attacked. In Brussels, however, one of the great churches of the city was defended against the attackers by a lone Spanish soldier with a pike, who held the door until help came and the iconoclasts were driven off.³⁶ Small wonder that Philip believed that what was needed in the Netherlands at that point was a few more Spanish soldiers like this one!

Now the battle was joined in full earnest, for though the Netherlands belonged unquestionably, by full hereditary right under the universally accepted doctrines of royal legitimacy of the time, to Philip II by virtue of his descent from the House of Burgandy, the fact that he was also King of Spain and the world's most powerful monarch could be used to argue for English aid to rebels who were preventing him from dominating the land nearest across the Channel from England. Strategically speaking, possession of the Netherlands was the key to the entire struggle to reunite Christendom, which was why this war went on for so long, continuing until all hope of reunion finally had to be given up with the Treaties of Westphalia in 1648. Spain poured her blood and treasure into the struggle; armies came from France and Germany, fighting now on one side, now on the other; repression alternated with conciliation, but nothing could stop the conflict – for many reasons, but above all because, as was never the case in France, the two chief protagonists were irreconcilable and indefatigable. Philip would not surrender the Netherlands to those whom he believed to be at least morally responsible for the “Calvinist fury” in Antwerp and the surrounding cities. Cecil exerted all his enormous skills in planning and intrigue to prevent Philip, by whatever manipulations and combinations might be necessary, from securing the Netherlands for the Catholic Faith.

Writing to Sir Henry Norris in Paris in July 1568, after the Dutch rebellion had broken out in May and a new struggle between Huguenot and Catholic seemed imminent in France, Cecil told him to tell the Huguenots “that if extremity should happen, they must not be left. For it is so universal a cause as none of the Religion can separate themselves one from the other. We must all pray together, stand fast together.”³⁷ And in August he wrote to Norris that “our whole expectation (as yours there is) resteth upon the event and success of these matters in the Low Countries, which as they shall fall out so, are like to produce consequences in the greater part of Christendom.”³⁸

In November 1586 four Spanish ships sought refuge in Plymouth harbor from Huguenot pirates roaming the English Channel. They carried an enormous quantity of Spanish money, borrowed by Philip in Genoa to pay Alva's troops in the Netherlands. The total amount is estimated at 85,000 pounds' worth. The Spanish ambassador asked that the ships either be escorted to Antwerp or the money shipped overland to Dover and thence to Antwerp. Cecil blandly replied that he was investigating the question of who owned the money. In fact he was in touch with the Genoese bankers, a representative of whom in London was persuaded to declare that the bankers had now decided to lend the money to Elizabeth instead of to Philip! Therefore, Cecil announced, the money belonged to his sovereign and he was taking charge of it.³⁹

The Duke of Alva, who was a man of honor, never could believe that this barefaced robbery was exactly what it seemed, and neither apparently could Philip. Years later they were still trying to pry the

money out of Cecil, naturally to no avail. Meanwhile the Spanish troops in the Netherlands went unpaid, and some of them began to plunder the countryside in consequence, increasing the unpopularity of the Spanish troops in the Low Countries. Finally, to pay them, Philip was forced to resort to increased taxation, all of which was grist to the mill of the rebels; and a vicious circle was begun which culminated eight years later in the “Spanish fury” at Antwerp when troops unpaid for a year and more ran wild in pillage, burning and massacre grimly reminiscent of the “Calvinist fury” in that same city that had begun the war, except that no sacrilege was involved.⁴⁰

Don Juan of Austria, Philip’s half-brother who had saved Christendom from the Turks at the Battle of Lepanto, succeeded by a remarkable combination of heroism, charm and dedication – which genuinely impressed even Cecil’s cynical, consummate master spy, Francis Walsingham – in staving off the total disaster for the Catholic cause in the Netherlands that had seemed sure to follow from the “Spanish fury.”⁴¹ After Don Juan’s sudden, premature death he was succeeded as Governor of the Netherlands by Alexander Farnese, Prince of Parma, called the greatest captain of his age, who gradually rebuilt Philip’s position in the Netherlands until by 1585 he had regained Antwerp and seemed on the verge of total victory. Then Cecil, now Lord Burghley, stepped in once more. Negotiations with Dutch commissioners were held all through the summer at Cecil’s home in Covent Garden, and on August 25, immediately after the taking of Antwerp for Philip, an offer of 5000 English infantry and 1000 cavalry was sent to Holland in Cecil’s own handwriting.⁴²

By now Cecil had Philip’s full measure, having reviewed the Spanish King’s tremendous record of service to the cause of the reunification of Christendom – which he naturally presented as the supreme threat – in a long memorandum to Elizabeth and her council on October 10, 1584. But Philip still did not recognize his greatest enemy. Two years later he was to dismiss him, in a letter to his ambassador Mendoza in London, as “a great heretic, but . . . very old . . . he has done no harm.”⁴³

THE BATTLE FOR ENGLAND

At that very moment, for all Philip’s incomprehension, he and Cecil were locked in the climactic phase of their forty-year duel, two gouty old men of 59 and 66, but each with a will of iron, a fixed and undeviating purpose, a brilliant mind and an almost incredible industry, exerting the full strength of an undiminished mental energy in their supreme effort. Cecil could not destroy Philip in Spain – the worst the English could do was make a few quick raids upon its coasts – but he could defeat Philip’s mission to restore a united Christendom. And the battle would be fought on Cecil’s home ground, for though Philip still greatly underestimated Cecil himself, he had learned at last that without England restored to her ancient faith, that faith would never again be secure. Philip had finally seen the truth which is now in retrospect so clear, that the permanent loss of Great Britain to Catholic Europe would mean that the Protestant breach could never be healed; and he began to plan in earnest the invasion of England.

Still he was not sure for a time that this ultimate challenge and risk would be necessary. For Elizabeth, yet unmarried, was now past child-bearing age, and her legitimate successor was unquestionably either Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, 18 years a prisoner in England, or her son James, separated from his mother before he was a year old, raised a Protestant, but disliking the ferocious Calvinism of John Knox’s Scotland, who had been in communication with the Pope in 1584 hinting that he might become a Catholic. But by 1586 it was clear to both Mary and Philip that James’ advances had been all deceit, that he cared little or nothing for the mother he had never known, and that there was no visible prospect of his conversions. Mary wrote to Philip on May 21, 1586 that she would make him her heir to the crowns of England and Scotland if James did not become a Catholic before she died. Said Mary: “I am obliged in this matter to consider the public welfare of the Church before the private aggrandisement of my own posterity.”⁴⁴

This is one of the most remarkable, selfless proposals in the whole intensely dynasty-conscious sixteenth century, and well merited Philip’s admiration “because she postpones her love for her son, which might be expected to lead her astray, for the service of Our Lord, the common good of

Christendom, and particularly for that of England.”⁴⁵ But the very day before Philip wrote those words to his ambassador Mendoza in London, Mary had been enticed into writing her fatal letter of July 17, 1586 to Anthony Babington approving, in general terms, his harebrained plan to free her and to have Queen Elizabeth assassinated.

Mary had fallen into a trap set with the most meticulous care by Francis Walsingham. Obtaining the services of Gilbert Gifford, a renegade English Catholic who had studied for the priesthood at Douai and attained the diaconate, Walsingham made Gifford an *agent provocateur* for the specific purpose of entangling Mary – whom Walsingham bitterly hated – in a treasonable conspiracy. Gifford set up a properly cloak-and-dagger communication system with Mary by means of letters put in a watertight packet passed through the bunghole of a beer barrel. By prearrangement with the brewer, he saw all the letters, incoming and outgoing, and passed them on to Walsingham before delivering them to the addressee. Then Gifford proceeded to suggest to those whom he knew were hoping to free Mary that it would be a good idea to kill Elizabeth as well, and he soon found a receptive ear in young, romantic and foolish Anthony Babington. Gifford also succeeded in deceiving Mendoza, who became enthusiastic about the plot, though Philip back in Spain had many doubts.⁴⁶

Walsingham’s decipherer drew a gallows on the outside of Mary’s coded letter of July 17 as he passed it on, and within a few days Cecil sprang the trap. Babington was arrested, personally examined by Cecil, and confessed everything. Mary was put into close confinement and stripped of her every possession, even her gold crucifix. On October 15, she was brought to trial; on the 25th she was convicted in the Star Chamber and sentenced to death. Cecil was now utterly resolved that she should die, to the point that when at the last moment Elizabeth drew back, first hesitating to sign Mary’s death warrant, then refusing to order it transmitted after it was signed, Cecil called a meeting of eleven of her councillors and brought them all to agree to send the death warrant themselves to Mary’s jailer and have the Queen of Scots executed before the Queen of England should know. It was done exactly as Cecil wished, an act of judicial murder which provoked Elizabeth into one of the greatest rages of her life; Cecil was out of favor for months. But neither rage nor tears could bring back the dead.⁴⁷

The news reached Philip at El Escorial March 31, 1587, and in the words of Garrett Mattingly:

After days when his pen hardly touched paper and his secretaries stood idle, suddenly, on the evening of March 31st, the secret heart of the Escorial pulsed with action. There was a volley of curt missives. Santa Cruz must try to be ready to sail before spring was over. The ships and stores at Cartagena and Malaga must hurry to Lisbon. The Biscayan shipwrights should have the 25,000 *escudos* advance they asked for, only let them make haste! The arsenal of the galleys at Barcelona was to review its ordnance and stores and release everything it could spare to equip the Atlantic armada. A similar order to Naples. An emphatic query as to what was delaying the saltpeter expected from Genoa. A brief veiled note to Parma: The plans already agreed on would be carried out with increased speed in view of recent events.⁴⁸

And to Rome Philip wrote: “I am grieved, since she would have been the most suitable instrument for leading those countries [England and Scotland] back to the Catholic faith. But since God in His wisdom has ordained otherwise, He will raise up other instruments for the triumph of His cause.”⁴⁹

From then until battle was joined in the Channel July 31, 1588, Philip would hear no criticism, brook no delay not absolutely essential, listen to no counsel which might call into question the mission of the Armada. He, who was known in Spain as “the prudent king,” for once overrode all caution, even all reasonable deliberation, in a total and terrible concentration on this enterprise on which, Mary Stuart’s fate had convinced him, the future of Christendom depended. And Cecil, once restored to Elizabeth’s favor in the fall of 1587, though often so ill that he had to be carried to the council chamber, personally saw to the arming and provisioning of the English battle fleet, the building and repair of its ships, and the pay of its sailors. Under his guiding hand this fleet, magnificently equipped and fighting from its home bases in its home waters, was more than a match on every point but courage for the Spanish Armada when, battered by storms, weakened by shortages and spoilage of provisions, and without a friendly port, it finally arrived in the Channel.⁵⁰

So great an impression did the size and imposing mien of the Armada make upon contemporaries and most later historians that only recently has it been realized not only that its mission was almost impossible tactically, but also that Philip's most competent military advisors knew it and had repeatedly told him so. The strategy was to use the Armada to convoy Parma's veteran army from the Netherlands to England, across the Channel. But the Dutch rebels held most of the seacoast opposite England and would under any circumstances command all of the offshore waters less than a galleon's draft of 25 feet, which in the shallow seas beyond Calais covered the decisive area. Even if the Armada defeated the English fleet, the shallow draft Dutch "flyboats" could interpose between the troop transports and the warships, sink the transports and drown the army. Nor could the Armada reasonably expect to defeat the English fleet, the best in Europe, thanks to Cecil in top condition, with an almost unlimited supply of ammunition while the Spanish could get none that they had not brought with them from Spain. After a series of hard-fought battles the English finally triumphed off Grave-lines, mainly because of the Spanish shortage of ammunition; and the last real chance to reunite Christendom was lost.⁵¹

The only hope for success in such an enterprise lay in extensive help from the English Catholics, who had risen in thousands against Elizabeth and Cecil in the north of England in 1569, and had been roused again by the splendid martyrdom of Edmund Campion and his fellow missionaries early in the Armada decade. But Philip had waited too long, as he seems to have realized during 1587 when he was so uncharacteristically, even desperately and recklessly, urging haste. Don Juan of Austria had proposed, in 1577, to go to the rescue of Mary Stuart and to marry her. The plan has been derided as a romantic dream, and certainly Don Juan was a romantic; but at Lepanto he had proved for all time that he was a romantic who knew how to win victories. It might have been done. But Philip, then all caution and prudence, had discouraged it.⁵²

A VICTORY IN FRANCE

Philip's imperturbable calm and courage in the face of the Armada disaster has become legendary,⁵³ and it is clear that he never for a moment allowed himself the luxury and the sin of despair. If Christendom could not be reunited, it still had to be saved, and he was still the most powerful Catholic monarch, the temporal sword of the Faith. In France, the last of Catherine de Medici's tragic sons was assassinated in the summer of 1589; the Protestant Henry of Navarre was his closest legitimate heir, but the overwhelmingly Catholic population of Paris was determined to resist him to the death for the Catholic cause. Henry needed money for an army, and he knew exactly where to go for it. Cecil received Henry's envoy at his own home at Covent Garden, where he personally handed him twenty thousand pounds. (Henry said later that he had never seen so much money together in one place before). Within a year Cecil saw that Henry got three times that amount; he began winning battles, and by the summer of 1590 only Paris held out, two months under siege with 13,000 dead of starvation, desperate but inspired to fight on largely by the Spanish ambassador, old Mendoza who had served in London before the Armada.⁵⁴

Philip saw his duty clearly. For 22 terrible years his armies had been fighting in the Netherlands. All the resources of the Spanish empire had been thrown into that struggle. At last, under the Prince of Parma, Spanish arms had begun to prevail, and had continued to advance despite even the shock of the Armada's defeat (which is why Belgium is Catholic to this day). But now Philip ordered his peerless general to leave the scene of his hard-won triumphs with his best men and march at once to the relief of Paris. Parma protested vigorously. All Flanders might be lost! Answered Philip, with the ring of steel: "If Flanders is lost, it belongs to me."⁵⁵ Parma marched. Paris was relieved and resupplied. In the end Henry decided (whether or not he actually said the famous words) that Paris was "worth a Mass."

Cecil was now 70, Philip 63; their bodies were wrecks, their work was done. The defeat of the Armada which Cecil had done so much to make possible would ring down the centuries. But after thirty years of the struggle that had begun with the Conspiracy of Amboise far back in 1560, Philip had saved

France for the Faith. And what can the sanctity of Joan of Arc mean to a Catholic if not that France, “eldest daughter of the Church,” must be saved for the Faith?

When the two great men had gone almost simultaneously to the ultimate Judge, in the summer of 1598, each left a son and heir whom he hoped above all would carry on his work. But Philip’s son, Philip III, had almost nothing of his father in him. He turned over the whole government of Spain and the empire to his worthless favorite, the Duke of Lerma. Robert Cecil, on the other hand, was almost a replica of his father, with much the same genius and all of the same ruthless and undeviating purpose. Secretary of State for England when his father died, Robert Cecil effectively ruled England, except for the “year of Essex” intervening between William Cecil’s death and Essex’s failure in Ireland, until Robert’s own death in 1612. Elizabeth’s mind gave way after the fall of Essex, and when she died and James succeeded her, he left most of the government in Cecil’s hands.

In England, despite all that had happened, there yet remained many faithful Catholics, and in Ireland the Faith was resolutely maintained by almost the entire native population. The great Irish rising which began in 1594 provided a last flicker of hope for the Catholic cause in the British Isles, fanned into a brief flame when Red Hugh O’Donnell and Hugh O’Neill won the Battle of the Yellow Ford as Philip II lay dying in El Escorial. But his son was tardy and insufficient with his help; Robert Cecil sent one of his most trusted men, George Carew, to Ireland to undermine and destroy the rising; and it was put down. Red Hugh O’Donnell – at thirty the hope of Ireland, a man of the model of Don Juan of Austria – went to Spain to plead personally for help at Philip III’s court sitting at Valladolid.⁵⁶

He never got there. He died on the way, at Simancas, and George Carew, who knew that an Irish traitor had gone to Spain specifically to kill him, was sure he had been poisoned. Carew, Cecil’s closest confidant on Irish affairs, was in the best possible position to know.⁵⁷

There remained the minority of Catholics in England, still substantial and reasonably active. To destroy all their influence and hopes, to remove them as a significant element in the English nation, was the clear objective of the last of the great Cecilian plot-coups, the famous Gunpowder Plot. In this case the plot was to blow up the Houses of Parliament with the King in them, the actual operation to be carried out by a Catholic soldier named Guy Fawkes. Whether or not, like the Babington plot which brought Mary Stuart to her death, the idea was actually concocted by an *agent provocateur* may never be known, though Hugh Ross Williamson makes a persuasive case for it; but handwriting analysis has now established a strong probability that the man who wrote the letter of October 25, 1605, to Baron Monteagle, revealing the plot in full detail – the letter which exposed the plot and was the principal documentary evidence in the subsequent trials – was none other than Robert Cecil himself.⁵⁸

With all his father’s skill in propaganda, Robert Cecil made this ‘deliverance’ from a plot he had at least known about from the beginning, if not suggested himself, a veritable national institution. Guy Fawkes Day became an annual anti-Catholic celebration which was in fact an exercise in hatred. The violent passions it aroused were kept alive in England well into our present century. So thoroughly was the second Cecil’s work done that when at long last, in 1685, England gained once more, by legitimate succession, a Catholic king in James II, he was deprived of his throne within three years. The division of Christendom was permanent; Robert Cecil had put the decisive finishing touch on his father’s work.

And so it was that all the far-flung nations that were to grow from the English colonies around the world would be, except for some Irish and Continental leaven, Protestant – indeed in the thirteen colonies that were to become the United States of America, John Adams would say that Catholics were as rare as hen’s teeth. As England and the United States were to lead the world in coming centuries, the effects of the virtual elimination of the Catholic Faith from them – effects not only historical and political but spiritual, in the lives of all who grew up in the culture of the English-speaking peoples to whom Catholicism had become almost wholly alien – were immense beyond all calculation.

Philip II and William Cecil could not see ahead to the particular form of the consequences of the outcome of their stupendous duel. But they well knew that some such consequences must follow, and that they were engaged in what might well be, for believing Christians on either side, the most important political cause in the whole history of the world. No inevitable march of progress foreordained Cecil’s successes and Philip’s defeats. The antagonists were so closely matched that victory could have gone to

either. Perhaps in the end the decisive fact was that Philip never identified his enemy. The King of Spain fought in the open, before all the world, under the hard blue sky of El Escorial,⁵⁹ Cecil fought in the dark and the fog, covering his traces, concealing his hand, always ready with his invisible foil at the critical point of the battle, locking secrets in his heart that no historian will ever fathom.

Only the Lord of History, He Who “writes straight with crooked lines,” knows why all of this had to happen, or the good that will in the end be brought forth from it.

NOTES

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- ¹See particularly Hilaire Belloc, *How the Reformation Happened* (New York, 1928) on this point.
- ²For a good brief argument in support of this thesis, see the chapter entitled *The Secularization of Modern Culture* in Christopher Dawson, *The Dividing of Christendom* (New York, 1967) pp. 200-207.
- ³This is one of the principal conclusions of Garrett Mattingly’s brilliant *The Armada* (New York, 1959).
- ⁴William Thomas Walsh, *Philip II* (New York, 1937), p. 646.
- ⁵Conyers Read’s two large volumes, *Mr. Secretary Cecil and Queen Elizabeth* (New York, 1955) and *Lord Burghley and Queen Elizabeth* (New York, 1960), containing abundant and lengthy quotations from Cecil’s letters and memoranda, provide ample evidence for this conclusion despite Read’s repeated gratuitous and often rather naive attempts to provide simple and twentieth-century conventional motivations for Cecil.
- ⁶Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil*, pp. 31-32; Walsh, *Philip II*, pp. 145, 212-216.
- ⁷Speaking to Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, in June 1548, Cecil described transubstantiation as “doubtful matter” and in the name of the Protector Somerset ordered him not to preach on it on the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul (Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil*, p. 47).
- ⁸Philip Hughes, *The Reformation in England*, rev. ed. (London, 1963), II, 200; Walsh, *Philip II*, pp. 145, 211.
- ⁹Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil*, pp. 103-104.
- ¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 104.
- ¹¹Walsh, *Philip II*, p. 146.
- ¹²Hughes, *Reformation in England*, II, 200.
- ¹³C.H. Garrett, *The Marian Exiles, a Study in the Origins of Elizabethan Puritanism* (London, 1938) pp. 1-29.
- ¹⁴Hughes, *Reformation in England*, II, 200; Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil*, pp. 112-113.
- ¹⁵Hugh Ross Williamson, *The Conspirators and the Crown* (London, 1958), pp. 211-212.
- ¹⁶Hughes, *Reformation in England*, III, 16-17.
- ¹⁷Walsh, *Philip II*, p. 219.
- ¹⁸Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil*, p. 128.
- ¹⁹See Francis Clark, *Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation*, (London, 1960), for an exhaustive treatment of this subject in support of the conclusion here given.
- ²⁰Hilaire Belloc, *Elizabethan Commentary* (London, 1942), pp. 178-183; Walsh, *Philip II*, pp. 709-710.
- ²¹Read, in *Mr. Secretary Cecil and Lord Burghley*, uncritical admirer of Cecil and Elizabeth though he is, seems to have proved his case on the question of Elizabeth’s degree of subservience to Cecil, as against Belloc, *History of England*, Volume IV (London, 1932), pp. 253-264 in particular. Read recounts and documents numerous instances in which Cecil was clearly overruled by Elizabeth on policy matters.
- ²²Walsh, *Philip II*, pp. 167-168.
- ²³*Ibid.*, p. 168.
- ²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 720-725. Philip’s throne room and bedroom may still be seen, almost perfectly restored and preserved, at El Escorial. Historians who write disparagingly about Philip’s “cell” and “closet” really ought to go to see El Escorial for themselves, with its unique mingling of simplicity and grandeur.

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 287-289, 364-365; Henri Daniel-Rops, *The Catholic Reformation* (New York, 1962), I, 224.

²⁶Walsh, *Philip II*, pp. 279-280; Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil*, p. 232.

²⁷Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil*, p. 241.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 289-291; Mary Sharp, *Saints in Europe* (London, 1964), p. 91. Neither the old nor the new *Cambridge Modern History* makes any mention whatever of these brutal acts of sacrilege. A vague and oblique reference to the desecration of the tombs and bodies of the saints is found in Marvin R. O'Connell, *The Counter Reformation* (New York, 1974), p. 139. There certainly were atrocities on both sides. But to understand what happened in France at the outbreak of the Wars of Religion it is absolutely vital to know the precise sequence of events, which only Walsh among the principal available sources provides. His evidence makes it clear that the Huguenot sacrilege and iconoclasm preceded the "massacre of Vassy" by the adherents of the Catholic Duke of Guise which is usually treated as the beginning of the Wars of Religion. It is only to be expected, much as it may be deplored, that such diabolical outrages as the burning of the incorrupt body of St. Francis of Paola and the wholesale slaughter of priests and nuns would provoke fierce reprisals from Catholics.

³⁰Walsh, *Philip II*, p. 292.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 287; James Brodrick, *The Progress of the Jesuits* (New York, 1947), pp. 55-60, 90-99.

³²Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil*, p. 211.

³³Read, *Lord Burghley*, pp. 247-255; Evelyn Waugh, *Edmund Campion, Jesuit and Martyr*, (Boston, 1946), pp. 152-156.

³⁴Hughes, *Reformation in England*, III, 254; Hugh Ross Williamson, *Historical Enigmas* (New York, 1974), pp. 90-95.

³⁵Walsh, *Philip II*, pp. 407 and 413-415, citing the circumstantial account of the crucial October conference by Philip's contemporary biographer Luis Cabrera de Cordoba, *Felipe II, Rey de Espana*, I, 493-495.

³⁶Walsh, *Philip II*, pp. 405-407; O'Connell, *Counter Reformation*, pp. 148-149; Pieter Geyl, *The Revolt of the Netherlands*, 2nd ed. (London, 1958), pp. 92-94.

³⁷Read, *Mr. Secretary Cecil*, p. 419.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 424.

³⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 432-433; Walsh, *Philip II*, pp. 478-479.

⁴⁰Walsh, *Philip II*, pp. 560-563.

⁴¹Charles Petrie, *Don John of Austria* (New York, 1967), pp. 290-318; Walsh, *Philip II*, p. 588.

⁴²Read, *Lord Burghley*, pp. 306-307, 322-323.

⁴³Walsh, *Philip II*, p. 646; Read, *Lord Burghley*, p. 307.

⁴⁴Antonia Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots* (New York, 1969), pp. 455-462; David H. Willson, *King James VI & I* (New York, 1956), pp. 50-53; Walsh, *Philip II*, p. 642.

⁴⁵Walsh, *Philip II*, p. 643.

⁴⁶Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, pp. 489-518; Walsh, *Philip II*, pp. 645-646; Mattingly, *Armada*, p. 21.

⁴⁷Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, pp. 489-518; Read, *Lord Burghley*, pp. 365-370; Mattingly, *Armada*, pp. 16-22.

⁴⁸Mattingly, *Armada*, pp. 80-81.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 201-217, 245-256; Read, *Lord Burghley*, pp. 410-426.

⁵¹Mattingly, *Armada*, pp. 318-341.

⁵²Petrie, *Don John of Austria*, pp. 246-249, 274-276.

⁵³The familiar stories of how the shattering news of the Armada's defeat was suddenly brought to Philip, and his stoical response, are rejected by Mattingly (*Armada*, pp. 388-389) on the basis of evidence that Philip had received letters reporting step by step the growing difficulties the Armada was encountering.

⁵⁴Read, *Lord Burghley*, pp. 458-459; Walsh, *Philip II*, p. 677.

⁵⁵Walsh, *Philip II*, p. 677.

⁵⁶Cyril Falls, *Elizabeth's Irish Wars* (New York, 1950), *passim*; Seumas MacManus, *The Story of the Irish Race*, 4th ed. (New York, 1944), though not always historically reliable, gives a memorable description on pp. 379-384 of what Red Hugh O'Donnell meant to the Irish.

⁵⁷Falls, *Elizabeth's Irish Wars*, p. 316.

⁵⁸See Hugh Ross Williamson, *The Gunpowder Plot* (London, 1951) and Francis Edwards, *Guy Fawkes* (London, 1969) for full details on the Plot and Robert Cecil's personal involvement.

⁵⁹The legend has persisted too long that El Escorial was a sort of hiding place for Philip, from which he rarely emerged, sitting forever at his desk like a spider at the center of its web. Such a picture is far more applicable to Cecil in his house at Covent Garden. As long as Philip could travel at all, he moved regularly about his kingdom; and El Escorial, to those who have been there, is not in the least like a hideaway. It looks out boldly over the plain of Madrid, with its back against soaring mountains, a fit place for a King to reign from, and is venerated by the people of Spain to this day.