

And the record of the seventeenth century is not much better, except as in it we discover the promise, the potency, and the preparation for vastly brighter days to come. And what we find of good omens is almost wholly upon the secular side of human affairs. Tremendous revolutions, both political and commercial, were at hand, destined in due season to open a door for the introduction of a pure Gospel into remotest continents and islands. For a full hundred years after the immortal achievements of Columbus and Magellan and De Gama, Spain and Portugal, both wholly devoted to the pope, had enjoyed an absolute monopoly of discovery, colonization, and trade in all the vast and new-found regions. No other nation had been daring or venturesome enough to trespass upon the boundless spaces of the Pacific, or scarcely to land for purposes of traffic upon the Eastern shores of the New World. But finally, through the intolerable tyranny of Philip II., three Protestant nations, and almost at the same time, were stirred to rebellion. And the change which resulted is one of the most momentous in the whole range of human history, greater far in its effects than the sending of Solomon's ships to Ophir, or the voyages and settlements of the ancient Phœnicians, and in its relation to the spread of the Gospel every way worthy to be compared with Alexander's conquests in remotest Persia and India, and the countless campaigns of the invincible Roman legions. The first result was in its nature only military, political, commercial. Supreme power simply passed from Catholic to Protestant hands. But the real divine meaning was world-widespread of Protestant ideas; or later and more especially the dominion of God's most highly honored missionary agency, the Anglo-Saxon race.

The Dutch were the first to poach upon the Portuguese preserves in the East Indies. They had maintained their independence against the utmost that Philip could do, and having united in his own person the sovereignty of the two kingdoms beyond the Pyrenees, and in order to punish these doughty Netherlanders whom he could not conquer, he forbade their ships to enter the port of Lisbon, then both entrepot and depot for the spices and all other products both of the East and West. The Hollanders had long been ocean carriers for all Europe, and thus were threatened with ruin utter and without remedy. Nor were they long in concluding that if not allowed to purchase what commodities they wanted nearer home, they would procure these in their native clime, and also at first hand. The annihilation of the Spanish Armada in 1588 supplied the golden opportunity. After three unsuccessful attempts to find a northeast passage by way of Nova Zembla, in 1596, the same year in which Van Linschoten, after fifteen years' acquaintance with the Portuguese and their commerce in Lisbon and the far East, had published a book full of information, containing many maps and charts, giving routes, laying down currents, rocks, harbors, etc., the Houtmann brothers doubled the Cape of Good Hope, and a few months later appeared in Sumatra waters. In 1602 the Dutch East India Company was organized under a charter which specified as one object to be sought