

**A HISTORY OF NEW YORK,  
FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE  
WORLD TO THE END OF THE  
DUTCH DYNASTY. IN TWO  
VOLUMES, VOL. II, PP. 8-235**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649041893

A History of New York, from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty. In Two Volumes, Vol. II, pp. 8-235 by Diedrich Knickerbocker

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Cover @ 2017

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**DIEDRICH KNICKERBOCKER**

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A  
HISTORY  
OF  
NEW-YORK,  
FROM THE  
BEGINNING OF THE WORLD  
TO THE  
END OF THE DUTCH DYNASTY.

CONTAINING,  
AMONG MANY SURPRISING AND CURIOUS MATTERS,  
THE UNUTTERABLE PONDERINGS OF WALTER THE DOUBTER  
THE DISASTROUS PROJECTS OF WILLIAM THE TESTY,  
AND THE CHIVALRIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF PETER  
THE HEADSTRONG,

THE THREE DUTCH GOVERNORS OF NEW-AMSTERDAM:

*Being the only Authentic History of the Times that ever hath been  
or ever will be published*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

A NEW EDITION.

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BY DIEDRICH KNICKERBOCKER.

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VOL. II.

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*De waarheid die in duister lag,  
Die komt met klaarheid aan den dag.*

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Philadelphia:

CAREY, LEA, & BLANCHARD.

1838.

E(1)2.

have laid it more to heart. Sage follows on in the footsteps of sage ; one hero just steps out of his triumphal car to make way for the hero who comes after him ; and of the proudest monarch it is merely said, that—"he slept with his fathers, and his successor reigned in his stead."

The world, to tell the private truth, cares but little for their loss, and if left to itself would soon forget to grieve ; and though a nation has often been figuratively drowned in tears on the death of a great man, yet it is ten chances to one if an individual tear has been shed on the occasion, excepting from the forlorn pen of some hungry author. It is the historian, the biographer, and the poet, who have the whole burden of grief to sustain ; who—kind souls !—like undertakers in England, act the part of chief mourners—who inflate a nation with sighs it never heaved, and deluge it with tears it never dreamt of shedding. Thus, while the patriotic author is weeping and howling, in prose, in blank verse, and in rhyme, and collecting the drops of public sorrow into his volume, as into a lachrymal vase, it is more than probable his fellow-citizens are eating and drinking, fiddling and dancing, as utterly ignorant of the bitter lamentations made in their name, as are those men of straw, John Doe and Richard Roe, of the plaintiffs for whom they are generously pleased on divers occasions to become sureties.

The most glorious and praiseworthy hero that ever desolated nations, might have mouldered into oblivion among the rubbish of his own monument,

did not some historian take him into favour, and benevolently transmit his name to posterity—and much as the valiant William Kieft worried, and bustled, and tarried, while he had the destinies of a whole colony in his hand, I question seriously, whether he will not be obliged to this authentic history for all his future celebrity.

His exit occasioned no convulsion in the city of New-Amsterdam or its vicinity: the earth trembled not, neither did any stars shoot from their spheres—the heavens were ~~not~~ shrouded in black, as poets would fain persuade us they have been on the unfortunate death of a hero—the rocks (hard-hearted varlets!) melted not into tears, nor did the trees hang their heads in silent sorrow; and as to the sun, he laid abed the next night, just as long, and showed as jolly a face when he arose, as he ever did on the same day of the month in any year, either before or since. The good people of New-Amsterdam, one and all, declared that he had been a very busy, active, bustling little governor; that he was “the father of his country”—that he was “the noblest work of God”—that “he was a man, take him for all in all, they ne’er should look upon his like again”—together with sundry other civil and affectionate speeches, that are regularly said on the death of all great men; after which they smoked their pipes, thought no more about him, and Peter Stuyvesant succeeded to his station.

Peter Stuyvesant was the last, and, like the renowned Wouter Van Twiller, he was also the best,

of our ancient Dutch governors: Wouter having surpassed all who preceded him, and Peter or Piet, as he was sociably called by the old Dutch burghers, who were ever prone to familiarize names, having never been equalled by any successor. He was in fact the very man fitted by Nature to retrieve the desperate fortunes of her beloved province, had not the fates, those most potent and unrelenting of all ancient spinsters, destined them to inextricable confusion.

To say merely that he was a hero would be doing him great injustice—he was in truth a combination of heroes—for he was of a sturdy, rawbone make, like Ajax Telamon, with a pair of round shoulders that Hercules would have given his hide for, (meaning his lion's hide,) when he undertook to ease old Atlas of his load. He was, moreover, as Plutarch describes Coriolanus, not only terrible for the force of his arm, but likewise of his voice, which sounded as though it came out of a barrel; and like the self-same warrior, he possessed a sovereign contempt for the sovereign people, and an iron aspect, which was enough of itself to make the very bowels of his adversaries quake with terror and dismay. All this martial excellency of appearance was inexpressibly heightened by an accidental advantage, with which I am surprised that neither Homer nor Virgil have graced any of their heroes. This was nothing less than a wooden leg, which was the only prize he had gained, in bravely fighting the battles of his country, but of which he was so proud, that he was often



heard to declare he valued it more than all his other limbs put together; indeed, so highly did he esteem it, that he had it gallantly enchased and relieved with silver devices, which caused it to be related in divers histories and legends that he wore a silver leg.\*

Like that choleric warrior, Achilles, he was somewhat subject to extempore bursts of passion, which were oft-times rather unpleasant to his favourites and attendants, whose perceptions he was apt to quicken, after the manner of his illustrious imitator, Peter the Great, by anointing their shoulders with his walking-staff.

Though I cannot find that he had read Plato, or Aristotle, or Hobbes, or Bacon, or Algernon Sydney, or Tom Paine, yet did he sometimes manifest a shrewdness and sagacity in his measures, that one would hardly expect from a man who did not know Greek, and had never studied the ancients. True it is, and I confess it with sorrow, that he had an unreasonable aversion to experiments, and was fond of governing his province after the simplest manner—but then he contrived to keep it in better order than did the erudite Kieft, though he had all the philosophers ancient and modern to assist and perplex him. I must likewise own that he made but very few laws, but then again he took care that those few were rigidly and impartially enforced—and I do not know but justice on the whole was as well administered as if there had been volumes of sage acts and statutes yearly made, and daily neglected and forgotten.

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\* See the histories of Masters Josselyn and Biome.

He was, in fact, the very reverse of his predecessors, being neither tranquil and inert, like Walter the Doubter, nor restless and fidgeting, like William the Testy; but a man, or rather a governor, of such uncommon activity and decision of mind that he never sought or accepted the advice of others; depending confidently upon his single head, as did the heroes of yore upon their single arms, to work his way through all difficulties and dangers. To tell the simple truth, he wanted no other requisite for a perfect statesman, than to think always right, for no one can deny that he always acted as he thought; and if he wanted in correctness, he made up for it in perseverance—an excellent quality! since it is surely more dignified for a ruler to be persevering and consistent in error, than wavering and contradictory, in endeavouring to do what is right. This much is certain, and it is a maxim worthy the attention of all legislators, both great and small, who stand shaking in the wind, without knowing which way to steer—a ruler who acts according to his own will is sure of pleasing himself, while he who seeks to satisfy the wishes and whims of others, runs a great risk of pleasing nobody. The clock that stands still, and points stedfastly in one direction, is certain of being right twice in the four-and-twenty hours—while others may keep going continually, and continually be going wrong.

Nor did this magnanimous virtue escape the discernment of the good people of Nieuw-Nederlandts; on the contrary, so high an opinion had they of the independent mind and vigorous intellect of their

new governor, that they universally called him *Hardkoppig Piet*, or Peter the Headstrong—a great compliment to his understanding!

If from all that I have said thou dost not gather, worthy reader, that Peter Stuyvesant was a tough, sturdy, valiant, weather-beaten, mettlesome, obstinate, leathern-sided, lion-hearted, generous-spirited old governor, either I have written to but little purpose, or thou art very dull at drawing conclusions.

This most excellent governor, whose character I have thus attempted feebly to delineate, commenced his administration on the 29th of May, 1647; a remarkably stormy day, distinguished in all the almanacs of the time which have come down to us, by the name of *Windy Friday*. As he was very jealous of his personal and official dignity, he was inaugurated into office with great ceremony; the goodly oaken chair of the renowned Wouter Van Twiller being carefully preserved for such occasions, in like manner as the chair and stone were reverentially preserved at Schone, in Scotland, for the coronation of the Caledonian monarchs.

I must not omit to mention, that the tempestuous state of the elements, together with its being that unlucky day of the week, termed "hanging day," did not fail to excite much grave speculation and divers very reasonable apprehensions among the more ancient and enlightened inhabitants; and several of the sager sex, who were reputed to be not a little skilled in the mysteries of astrology and fortune-telling, did declare outright, that they were omens