

withstand any enemy attempting to molest them. The assurance that the ships were so good and so well armed, and that the seamen were so brave and trustworthy, induced all European merchants to employ them for the transport of their goods. They were consequently almost always making voyages, and the profits were so large that not only were they kept in good repair, but new vessels were constantly built, and the full number was thus maintained. Ragusa increased in wealth, in honour, and in population, for the Republic was greatly esteemed by the princes and potentates of the world. But in consequence of the recent truce concluded by His Catholic Majesty with the Netherlands, Michael Waez, Count of Mola, was able to introduce Dutch ships into the Mediterranean and the Adriatic for the purposes of commerce, and these vessels, not being exposed to the attacks of the Turks, the Moors, the English, and the other enemies of Spain, were under no necessity of defending themselves. They were therefore able to sail with small crews at small expense, and charge lower freights. Wherefore most of Ragusan ships began to fall into disrepair and were not renovated. . . . The only remedy for this woeful decline is that His Catholic Majesty, in the interests and for the maintenance of this most excellent Republic and of his own vassals, should grant to all those who build large ships special exemptions and privileges throughout his kingdoms of Spain, Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia, and that preference should be given to those designed for the transport of grain, salt, wool, and other similar goods."

The Dutch now almost monopolised the carrying