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### At spes non fracta, Hope & Co. 1770-1815

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## PREFACE

The setting for this study is reflected in the sub-title 'Merchant and diplomats at work.' The aim is to follow the partners in their and diverse activities: in their relationship towards each other, in contacts with other houses and in their attitudes towards government officials. Moreover, the author has attempted to show the motives for the commercial and financial actions, where these were discernible. A point of departure such as this implies that the surviving correspondence constitutes the principal source of information. Quantitative data are included, but within this framework their role is subsidiary.

Because this book is intended for various categories of readers, it has been divided into three parts. The introductory chapter, which contains an abridged history of Hope & Co. up to 1815, is intended for those whose interest in the subject is of a more general nature. In the same chapter, a number of main themes such as the growth of foreign loans in the Netherlands and the technique *per se* of issuing loans are discussed, and attention is devoted to some of the problems of trade and to the question whether Hope & Co. should be viewed as merchants or as bankers. In conclusion, an impression is given of the part played by Amsterdam as a financial centre during the Napoleonic era and of the very exceptional position which Hope & Co. occupied at that time.

In the succeeding chapters, the principal themes are examined in detail with the aid of a number of case studies. There is more to the subdivision into Baltic Affairs and Iberian Affairs than appears at first sight: while Baltic Affairs according to the sub-title deals only with loans, and Iberian Affairs only with produce, it becomes clear in the elaboration of the chapters that, in the eyes of Messrs. Hope, mercantile transactions and financial affairs were inextricably interwoven. Accordingly, only in the final chapter do contents and title correspond.

The Notes are intended for researchers who desire to go deeper into certain aspects of this study. This explains their comprehensive nature.

But for the decision taken by Messrs. Hope in 1953 to commission a history of the house, this study would not have been embarked upon. Without the decision of the present-day Board of Bank Mees & Hope to

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allow the study to continue and to have the result published in book form, the work would not have been completed. The great abundance of data in the Hope archives is illustrated by the fact that, in spite of the length of this book, the author was obliged to limit himself to the period up to 1815.

The author acknowledges with gratitude the interest displayed by the former partners and by the members of the present Board throughout the period during which this book was written. This applies particularly to Jhr. W.J. van Sminia, to whom the book is dedicated. Without his support, mediation and encouragement, this study might well not have seen the light of day.

The author owes a debt of gratitude to his mentor, Jhr. Prof. P.J. van Winter, who brought about the contact between Messrs. Hope & Co. and him, and who, by reason of his exceptionally wide knowledge of the subject matter, has been a source of constant support. Prof. E.H. Kossmann read through the chapters and, drawing on his very great knowledge of literature and wide experience, offered valuable advice which benefited this book and for which the author is most grateful.

Three successive librarians of the University of Groningen, Dr. H. de Buck, the late Dr. S.J. Bouma and Mr. W.R.H. Koops, offered the hospitality of their institution to the Hope archives and to the author for a period of twenty years. The author is greatly indebted to Mr. Koops who, as a friend, allowed him to benefit from his experience as a publisher. The author's thanks are due to the staff of the University Library for their willing assistance and their interest in the advancement of the study.

A search into the history of Hope & Co. would be impossible without data from the municipal archives in Amsterdam. The author is grateful to the archivist, Dr. W.J. van Hoboken, for having made it possible for him to freely carry out his researches, and also to Dr. S. Hart who, with his immense knowledge of economic data, so willingly assisted him in this task.

Many have assisted the author during his investigations, or have aided him in other ways. While it is impossible to refer to them all by name, the author wishes to make an exception in the case of Mr. Derek S. Jordan, the translator of this book, whose critical observations were instrumental in ironing out a number of wrinkles.

Finally, the author is indebted to his family: to his children, who from an early age have shown him every consideration, and above all to his wife, who sustained her husband in the broadest sense of the term throughout the genesis of this book.