



CHAPTER XV

WILLIAM III AND THE WAR WITH FRANCE

[1672-1722 A.D.]

THE massacre of the De Witts completely destroyed the party of which they were the head. All men now united under the only leader left to the country. William showed himself well worthy of the trust, and of his heroic blood. He turned his whole force against the enemy. He sought nothing for himself but the glory of saving his country; and taking his ancestors for models, in the best points of their respective characters, he combined prudence with energy, and firmness with moderation. His spirit inspired all ranks of men. The conditions of peace demanded by the partner kings were rejected with scorn. The whole nation was moved by one concentrated principle of heroism; and it was even resolved to put the ancient notion of the first William into practice, and abandon the country to the waves, sooner than submit to the political annihilation with which it was threatened. The capability of the vessels in their harbours was calculated; and they were found sufficient to transport two hundred thousand families to the Indian settlements. We must hasten from this sublime picture of national desperation. The glorious hero who stands in its foreground was inaccessible to every overture of corruption. Buckingham, the English ambassador, offered him, on the part of England and France, the independent sovereignty of Holland, if he would abandon the other provinces to their grasp; and, urging his consent, asked him if he did not see that the republic was ruined? "There is one means," replied the prince of Orange, "which will save me from the sight of my country's ruin. I will die in the last ditch."

Action soon proved the reality of the prince's profession. He took the field, having first punished with death some of the cowardly commanders of the frontier towns. He besieged and took Naarden, an important place; and, by a masterly movement, formed a junction with Montecuculi, whom

[1672-1675 A.D.]

the emperor Leopold had at length sent to his assistance with 20,000 men. Groningen repulsed the bishop of Münster, the ally of France, with a loss of 12,000 men. The king of Spain (such are the strange fluctuations of political friendship and enmity) sent the count of Monterey, governor of the Belgian provinces, with 10,000 men to support the Dutch army. The elector of Brandenburg also lent them aid.

The whole face of affairs was changed; and Louis was obliged to abandon all his conquests with more rapidity than he had made them.

ENGLAND WITHDRAWS FROM THE WAR

Two desperate battles at sea, on the 28th of May and the 4th of June,¹ in which De Ruyter and Prince Rupert again distinguished themselves, only proved the valour of the combatants, leaving victory still doubtful.

England was with one common feeling ashamed of the odious war in which the king and his unworthy ministers had engaged the nation. Charles was forced to make peace on the conditions proposed by the Dutch. The honour of the flag was yielded to the English; a regulation of trade was agreed to; all possessions were restored to the same condition as before the war; and the states-general agreed to pay the king 800,000 patacoons, or nearly £300,000.

With these encouraging results from the prince of Orange's influence and example, Holland persevered in the contest with France. He, in the first place, made head, during a winter campaign in Holland, against Marshal Luxemburg, who had succeeded Turenne in the Low Countries, the latter being obliged to march against the imperialists in Westphalia. He next advanced to oppose the great Condé, who occupied Brabant with an army of forty-five thousand men. After much manœuvring, in which the prince of Orange displayed consummate talent, he on one only occasion exposed a part of his army to a disadvantageous contest. Condé seized on the error; and of his own accord gave the battle to which his young opponent could not succeed in forcing him. The battle of Seneffe is remarkable not merely for the fury with which it was fought, or for its leaving victory undecided, but as being the last combat of one commander and the first of the other. "The prince of Orange," said the veteran Condé (who had that day exposed his person more than on any previous occasion), "has acted in everything like an old captain, except venturing his life too like a young soldier."

The campaign of 1675 offered no remarkable event, the prince of Orange with great prudence avoiding the risk of a battle.^b

THE LAST BATTLE OF DE RUYTER

On sea, the power of the Dutch nation had, from the time of the appointment of the prince of Orange as admiral-general, gradually declined. Whether that the conduct of the French, during the late war, had inspired him with a contempt for the naval prowess of that nation, or from some less excusable

[¹ As usual, there is a difference of ten days in the dates set for these battles, the Dutch dating them June 7th and June 14th. De Ruyter had tried in vain to block the mouth of the Thames by sinking vessels. The English finally came out with a superior force, and the first encounter was off Schoeneveldt. In the second the English retired, but the Dutch, fearing a ruse, did not pursue. In a third encounter, in the Texel, August 1st [or 21st], the English were repulsed in an effort to capture the East India fleet. The English captured the island of Tobago and took four merchantmen, but the Dutch fleet, under Evertsen, captured New York and took or sank sixty-five of the Newfoundland ships.]

[1676 A.D.]

motive, William sent De Ruyter to the Mediterranean with an insufficient and miserably-equipped fleet of eighteen ships, to make head against an enemy whose force consisted of above thirty sail; while the aid of the Spaniards, who had already sustained a severe defeat, was utterly inefficient. In vain did De Ruyter remonstrate against the rashness of thus wantonly exposing the flag of the states to insult; the only answer he received was an imputation that he began to grow timid in his old age; in vain, too, did his friends endeavour to persuade this noble-minded patriot to refuse

peremptorily to put to sea with so inadequate a force. It was his duty, he said, to obey the commands of the states; and having taken a last farewell of his family and friends, to whom he expressed his conviction that he should never return, he embarked at Hellevoetsluis, and with the first fair wind set sail for his destination.

He encountered the French fleet under the admiral Duquesne, between the islands of Stromboli and Salina, but without any decisive result. Having effected a junction with ten Spanish vessels, he came to a second engagement on the coast of Sicily, with Duquesne, who had likewise received a reinforcement of twelve men-of-war and four frigates. Almost at the commencement of the battle, De Ruyter was struck by a cannon ball,



A PATIENT AND DOCTOR — SEVENTEENTH CENTURY INTERIOR
(After the painting by Jan Steen, 1626-1679)

which carried off the fore part of his left foot and broke two bones of the right leg. He continued, however, to give his orders with undiminished activity, and concealed the disaster so effectually that neither friend nor enemy had the slightest suspicion of the truth. Both parties ascribed to themselves the victory; the relations on each side differing so widely that it is scarcely possible to conceive they allude to the same event. The most signal defeat, however, would have been a far less grievous calamity to the Dutch than that which they had to sustain in the loss of their great admiral, whose wounds proved fatal a few days after (April 29th, 1676).

De Ruyter is one of those characters whose faultless excellence would, were we obliged to rely solely on the evidence of the biographer and paregyrist, almost create a doubt of its reality, as if beyond the scope of human nature to attain. But in his case, the highest eulogiums are con-

[1676 A.D.]

firmed to the rull by the concurring testimony of political opponents, and by the dry and impartial records of history. As a commander, valour was his least qualification; his genius, judgment, and foresight were equal to every emergency. In situations where temerity was wisdom, none could be more reckless and daring; when prudence dictated caution, none could incur more bravely the imputation of timidity.

During the troubled times of the republic, when he often received orders so equivocal or contradictory that whatever course he pursued could scarcely escape censure, he never failed to adopt such as both partisans and opponents agreed in pronouncing wisest and best. The strict discipline he maintained in the navy was softened by his perfect equanimity of temper, his strict regard to justice, his humanity and affability. The purest of republics, in the purest age of its existence, could never boast of a citizen of more incorruptible integrity, disinterestedness, or genuine simplicity of manners. The honours and titles of nobility heaped upon him by nearly every prince of Europe, the consciousness that he was the object of the respect and admiration of the whole civilised world, never in the slightest degree overcame his innate modesty. He gratefully refused the numerous invitations he received to visit foreign courts, and retained unchanged through life the frugal establishment and quiet deportment of a burgher of the middling class. He felt not the slightest shame at the obscurity of his origin,¹ but was, on the contrary, accustomed frequently to mention it in the presence of the most exalted personages, and to hold up his own example to the sailors as an incentive to honourable exertion.

The deficiency of his early education was compensated by the quickness of his apprehension, the clearness of his ideas, and the capacity and retentiveness of his memory. The latter faculty he possessed in such an extraordinary degree that he was able to recall exactly every circumstance, even the most minute, that had occurred from the time of his first going to sea, and the christian and surname of every man who had sailed with him. From conversation, he rapidly acquired the Spanish, Portuguese, English, and French languages, so as to speak them with elegance and fluency. In private life, the virtues of a husband, father, friend, and citizen shone out with a lustre softer, but not less brilliant, than that which adorned his public career.

Death, which he had so often looked upon with calmness, came to him stripped of its terrors, and terminated, without a pang or a struggle, his exalted and blameless career of nearly seventy years. His body was embalmed, and, on the return of the fleet, carried to Amsterdam to be interred, amidst the tears of his countrymen.

The suspicion which had insinuated itself among the people, that this excellent and esteemed servant of the republic, a staunch and faithful adherent of the De Witt party, had been sacrificed to the jealousy of the stadholder, contributed to diminish still further the unbounded popularity he had at first enjoyed, and which the discovery of his ambitious views upon the sovereignty of the provinces, and the constant failure of his military enterprises, had already considerably undermined.

This year (1676) was doubly occupied in a negotiation for peace and an active prosecution of the war. Louis, at the head of his army, took several towns in Belgium; William was unsuccessful in an attempt on Maestricht. About the beginning of winter, the plenipotentiaries of the several belligerents assembled at Nimeguen, where a congress for peace was held. The

¹ In early youth he worked in a rope-yard, at the wages of a penny a day, and was first sent to sea as a cabin-boy.

Hollanders, loaded with debts and taxes, and seeing the weakness and slowness of their allies the Spaniards and Germans, prognosticated nothing but misfortunes. Their commerce languished; while that of England, now neutral amidst all these quarrels, flourished extremely. The prince of Orange, however, ambitious of glory, urged another campaign; and it commenced accordingly.

In the middle of February, 1677, Louis carried Valenciennes by storm, and laid siege to St. Omer and Cambray. William, though full of activity, courage, and skill, was nevertheless almost always unsuccessful in the field, and never more so than in this campaign. Several towns fell almost at his sight.^b

WILLIAM MARRIES THE PRINCESS MARY OF ENGLAND (1677)

William now resolved upon making one strenuous effort, either to engage the king of England as principal in the confederacy, or induce him to take a more active part as mediator. He had before discovered to the English ambassador, Sir William Temple, an inclination to form a matrimonial alliance with Mary, eldest daughter of the duke of York; and, taking the opportunity of that minister's temporary return to the court of London, he now obtained, through his mediation, permission from the king to pay him a visit for the purpose of forwarding his suit to the princess. He was kindly received both by the king and the duke of York; but Charles, who was to the full as anxious to gratify France by a peace as the prince to prolong the war, desired that this matter should first be taken into consideration. But the proposal met with a direct negative from William; as he feared lest the allies, who had already taken some alarm on the subject of his visit, should accuse him of having sacrificed their interests to his own ambition for this alliance; and though captivated with the charms of the Lady Mary, he expressed, with strong symptoms of disappointment and vexation, his determination of immediately taking his departure, unless the business of the marriage were first concluded; observing that it was for the king to choose whether they were henceforth to live as the greatest friends or the greatest enemies. The solicitations of Temple and the lord-treasurer Danby at length induced Charles to yield this point, and within a few days the marriage was celebrated, to the great and universal joy of the nation.^c

THE PEACE OF NIMEGUEN AND THE AUGSBURG LEAGUE

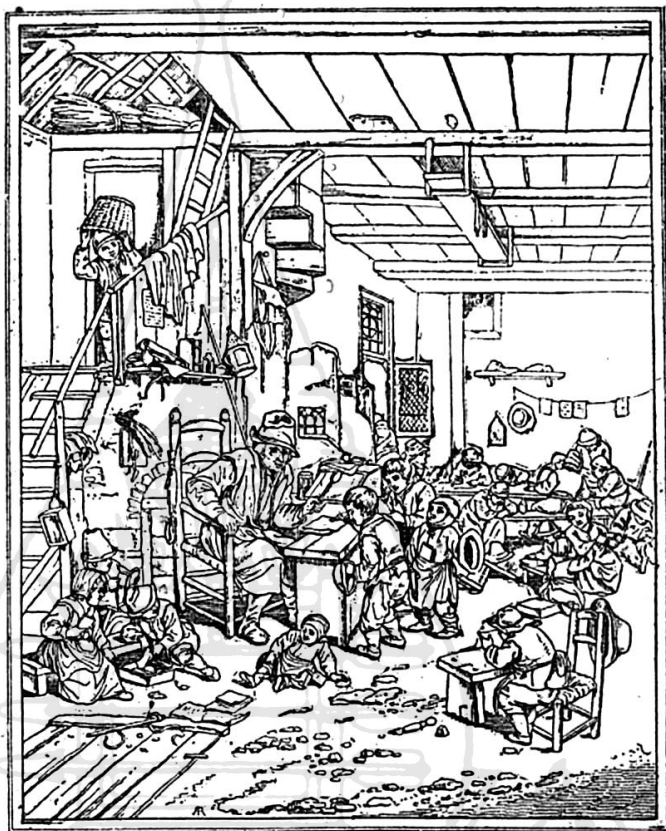
Charles was at this moment the arbiter of the peace of Europe; and though several fluctuations took place in his policy in the course of a few months as the urgent wishes of the parliament and the large presents of Louis differently actuated him, still the wiser and more just course prevailed; and he finally decided the balance by vigorously declaring his resolution for peace; and the treaty was consequently signed at Nimeguen, on the 10th of August, 1678. The prince of Orange, from private motives of spleen or a more unjustifiable desire for fighting, took the extraordinary measure of attacking the French troops under Luxemburg, near Mons, on the very day after the signing of this treaty. He must have known it, even though it were not officially notified to him, and he certainly had to answer for all the blood so wantonly spilt in the sharp though undecided action which ensued. Spain, abandoned to her fate, was obliged to make the best terms she could; and on the 17th of September she also concluded a treaty with France, on conditions entirely favourable to the latter power.

[1673-1685 A.D.]

A few years passed over after this period, without the occurrence of any transaction sufficiently important to require a mention here. Charles of England was sufficiently occupied by disputes with parliament, and the discovery, fabrication, and punishment of plots, real or pretended. Louis XIV, by a stretch of audacious pride hitherto unknown, arrogated to himself the supreme power of regulating the rest of Europe, as if all the other princes were his vassals. He established courts, or chambers of reunion as they were called, in Metz and Brisac, which cited princes, issued decrees, and authorised spoliation, in the most unjust and arbitrary manner. Louis chose to award to himself Luxemburg, Chiny, and a considerable portion of Brabant and Flanders. He marched a considerable army into Belgium, which the Spanish governors were unable to oppose.

The prince of Orange, who laboured incessantly to excite a confederacy among the other powers of Europe against the unwarrantable aggressions of France, was unable to arouse his countrymen to actual war; and was forced, instead of gaining the glory he longed for, to consent to a truce for twenty years, which the states-general, now wholly pacific and not a little cowardly, were too happy to obtain from France. The emperor and the king of Spain gladly entered into a like treaty. The fact was that the peace of Nimeguen had disjoined the great confederacy which William had so successfully brought about; and the various powers were laid utterly prostrate at the feet of the imperious Louis, who for a while held the destinies of Europe in his hands.

Charles II died most unexpectedly in the year 1685. His successor, James II, seemed, during a reign of not four years' continuance, to rush wilfully headlong to ruin. During this period, the prince of Orange had maintained a most circumspect and unexceptionable line of conduct: steering clear of all inter-



A DUTCH SCHOOL (1662)

(After the painting by Adriaan van Ostade, 1610-1685)

[1685-1688 A.D.]

ference with English affairs; giving offence to none of the political factions; and observing in every instance the duty and regard which he owed to his father-in-law. During Monmouth's invasion he had despatched to James' assistance six regiments of British troops which were in the Dutch service, and he offered to take the command of the king's forces against the rebels.

It was from the application of James himself that William took any part in English affairs; for he was more widely and much more congenially employed in the establishment of a fresh league against France. Louis had aroused a new feeling throughout Protestant Europe, by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The refugees, whom he had driven from their native country, inspired in those in which they settled hatred of his persecution as well as alarm at his power. Holland now entered into all the views of the prince of Orange. By his immense influence he succeeded in forming the great confederacy called the League of Augsburg, to which the emperor, Spain, and almost every European power but England, became parties.

James gave the prince reason to believe that he too would join in this great project, if William would in return concur in his views of domestic tyranny; but William wisely refused. James, much disappointed, expressed his displeasure against the prince, and against the Dutch generally, by various vexatious acts.

WILLIAM BECOMES KING OF ENGLAND (1689)

William resolved to maintain a high attitude; and many applications were made to him by the most considerable persons in England for relief against James' violent measures, which there was but one method of making effectual. That method was force. But so long as the princess of Orange was certain of succeeding to the crown on her father's death, William hesitated to join in an attempt that might possibly have failed and lost her her inheritance. But the birth of a son, which, in giving James a male heir, destroyed all hope of redress for the kingdom, decided the wavering, and rendered the determined desperate. The prince chose the time for his enterprise with the sagacity, arranged its plan with the prudence, and put it into execution with the vigour, which were habitual qualities of his mind.

Louis XIV, menaced by the League of Augsburg, had resolved to strike the first blow against the allies. He invaded Germany; so that the Dutch preparations seemed in the first instance intended as measures of defence against the progress of the French. But Louis' envoy at the Hague could not be long deceived. He gave notice to his master, who in his turn warned James. But that infatuated monarch not only doubted the intelligence, but refused the French king's offers of assistance and co-operation. On the 21st of October the prince of Orange, with an army of fourteen thousand men, and a fleet of five hundred vessels of all kinds, set sail from Hellevoetsluis; and after some delays from bad weather he safely landed his army in Torbay, on the 5th of November, 1688. The desertion of James' best friends; his own consternation, flight, seizure, and second escape; and the solemn act by which he was deposed — were the rapid occurrences of a few weeks; and thus the grandest revolution that England had ever seen was happily consummated. Without entering here on legislative reasonings or party sophisms, it is enough to record the act itself; and to say, in reference to our more immediate subject, that without the assistance of Holland and her glorious chief England might have still remained enslaved, or have had to purchase liberty by oceans of blood. By the bill of settlement the crown was conveyed jointly to the prince and



JAMES II RECEIVING THE NEWS OF THE LANDING OF THE PRINCE OF ORANGE

(From the painting by Edward M. Ward, in the National Gallery)

[1689-1695 A.D.]

princess of Orange, the sole administration of government to remain in the prince; and the new sovereigns were proclaimed on the 23rd of February, 1689. The convention, which had arranged this important point, annexed to the settlement a declaration of rights, by which the powers of royal prerogative and the extent of popular privilege were defined and guaranteed.^b

The satisfaction which the Dutch experienced at having given a sovereign to so great and renowned a nation, an event calculated to add strength to the cause of the reformed religion, and permanently secure to themselves the English alliance, gave place in a great degree to the not groundless apprehension that the king would be tempted to sacrifice the interests of the weaker state, where his authority was undisputed, to those of the larger and more powerful. Many, who considered the office of hereditary stadholder incompatible with that of King of England, expected that he would resign the former; but this anticipation was disappointed in the receipt of his first message to the States, informing them of his elevation to the throne, and professing that this circumstance would in no wise lessen his care and affection for them, but enable him on the contrary to exercise the office he held in the United Provinces for their greater service and advantage. But, notwithstanding these fair promises, it soon became evident how little they had to hope for either from him or the English nation, in return for the liberal and generous assistance afforded them in the late emergency.^c

WAR WITH FRANCE

William now presented the singular instance of a monarchy and a republic being at the same time governed by the same individual. But whether as a king or a citizen, William was actuated by one powerful principle, to which every act of private administration was made subservient. Inveterate opposition to the power of Louis XIV was this all-absorbing motive.

A sentiment so mighty left William but little time for inferior points of government, and everything but that seems to have irritated and disgusted him. He was soon again on the Continent, the chief theatre of his efforts. He put himself in front of the confederacy which resulted from the congress of Utrecht in 1690. He took the command of the allied army; and till the hour of his death he never ceased his indefatigable course of hostility, whether in the camp or the cabinet, at the head of the allied armies, or as the guiding spirit of the councils which gave them force and motion.

Several campaigns were expended and bloody combats fought, almost all to the disadvantage of William, whose genius for war was never seconded by that good fortune which so often decides the fate of battles in defiance of all the calculations of talent. But no reverse had power to shake the constancy and courage of William. He always appeared as formidable after defeat as he was before action. His conquerors gained little but the honour of the day. Fleurus, Steenkerke, Neerwinden were successively the scenes of his evil fortune, and the sources of his fame. His retreats were master strokes of vigilant activity and profound combinations. Many eminent sieges took place during this war. Among other towns, Mons and Namur were taken by the French, and Huy by the allies; and the army of Marshal Villeroy bombarded Brussels during three days, in August, 1695, with such fury that the town-house, fourteen churches, and four thousand houses were reduced to ashes. The year following this event saw another undecisive campaign.^b

William engaged Tromp to return to the navy and resume his position

[1691-1700 A.D.]

as vice-admiral and appointed him in 1691 to the command of the English and Dutch navy. Both countries rejoiced much on seeing once more installed at the head of the naval force a man so courageous and able as Tromp.

Europe awaited, expectant of great achievements on the sea, the campaign of 1691. The French forces were commanded by the count de Tourville, who had given in numerous engagements striking proof of his ability. The arming and equipment of the fleet was carried on assiduously, when the death of Tromp occurred. A mortal malady had ended his life on the 29th of May, 1691.

The news of his death spread rapidly through Holland and carried consternation everywhere. The great need that the nation had of him made his loss felt to the full extent. Cornelis Tromp is placed justly among the naval heroes of Holland. He gave new glory to the name already made illustrious by his father. His courage was an incentive to his countrymen, who endeavoured to imitate it. It was always he who attacked the enemy. Many times did he throw himself in the middle of an English fleet, dispersing all who crossed his course; attacking always the vessel which seemed most able to resist him.^d

During the continuance of this war, the naval transactions present no grand results. Jean Bart, a celebrated adventurer of Dunkirk, occupies the leading place in those affairs, in which he carried on a desultory but active warfare against the Dutch and English fleets, and generally with great success.

PEACE OF RYSWICK

All the nations which had taken part in so many wars were now becoming exhausted by the contest, but none so much so as France. England, though with much resolution voting new supplies, and in every way upholding William in his plans for the continuance of war, was rejoiced when Louis accepted the mediation of Charles XI, king of Sweden, and agreed to concessions which made peace feasible. Everything was finally arranged to meet the general views of the parties, and negotiations were opened at Ryswick. On the 20th of September, 1697, the articles of the treaty were subscribed by the Dutch, English, Spanish, and French ambassadors. The treaty consisted of seventeen articles. The French king declared he would not disturb or disquiet the king of Great Britain, whose title he now for the first time acknowledged. Between France and Holland were declared a general armistice, perpetual amity, a mutual restitution of towns, a reciprocal renunciation of all pretensions upon each other, and a treaty of commerce which was immediately put into execution. Thus, after this long, expensive, and sanguinary war, things were established just on the footing they had been by the peace of Nimeguen. The peace became general, but unfortunately for Europe it was of very short duration.

France, as if looking forward to the speedy renewal of hostilities, still kept her armies undissolved. Let the foresight of her politicians have been what it might, this negative proof of it was justified by events. The king of Spain, a weak prince, without any direct heir for his possessions, considered himself authorised to dispose of their succession by will. The leading powers of Europe thought otherwise, and took this right upon themselves. Charles died on the 1st of November, 1700, and thus put the important question to the test. By a solemn testament he declared Philip duke of Anjou, second son of the dauphin, and grandson of Louis XIV, his successor to the whole of the Spanish monarchy. Louis immediately renounced his adherence to

[1701 A. D.]

the treaties of partition, executed at the Hague and in London in 1698 and 1700, and to which he had been a contracting party; and prepared to maintain the act by which the last of the descendants of Charles V bequeathed the possession of Spain and the Indies to the family which had so long been the inveterate enemy and rival of his own.

The emperor Leopold, on his part, prepared to defend his claims; and thus commenced the new war between him and France, which took its name from the succession which formed the object of dispute. Hostilities were commenced in Italy, where Prince Eugene, the conqueror of the Turks, commanded for Leopold, and every day made for himself a still more brilliant reputation. Louis sent his grandson to Spain to take possession of the inheritance for which so hard a fight was yet to be maintained.

Louis prepared to act vigorously. Among other measures, he caused part of the Dutch army that was quartered in Luxemburg and Brabant to be suddenly made prisoners of war, because they would not own Philip V as king of Spain. The states-general were dreadfully alarmed, immediately made the required acknowledgment, and in consequence had their soldiers released. They quickly reinforced their garrisons, purchased supplies, solicited foreign aid, and prepared for the worst that might happen. They wrote to King William, professing the most inviolable attachment to England; and he met their application by warm assurances of support, and an immediate reinforcement of three regiments.

DEATH OF WILLIAM III

William followed up these measures by the formation of the celebrated treaty called the Grand Alliance, by which England, the states, and the emperor covenanted for the support of the pretensions of the latter to the Spanish monarchy. William was preparing, in spite of his declining health, to take his usual lead in the military operations now decided on, and almost all Europe was again looking forward to his guidance, when he died on the 8th of March, 1701, leaving his great plans to receive their execution from still more able adepts in the art of war.^b

DAVIES' ESTIMATE OF WILLIAM III

William had to sustain a life of anxiety and fatigue, under the disadvantage of a feeble constitution of body: betrayed by his slight and attenuated frame, though in no degree in his countenance, which was clear, animated, and sparkling.

In a military point of view, he presents the singular phenomenon of a commander indebted for a high reputation solely to reverses and defeats, his peculiar constitution of mind being indeed such as to insure for him both the reverses and the reputation. Deficient in inventive faculty, slow of comprehension, hesitating and unready, without a sufficient degree of confidence in his own opinions, and too proud to endure contradiction or adopt the suggestions of others, he was unable immediately to perceive the skilful combinations of the great generals opposed to him or to cope with their rapid and masterly movements; and often allowed the opportunity for action to escape, or formed his plans in ignorance of some point which, if seized, would have occasioned them to be wholly different.

In the field of battle, on the other hand, the discovery of errors previously committed caused in him neither vacillation nor apprehension. Roused

to animation, full of unwonted fire and energy, he was present everywhere, and exposed himself with indifference to the most imminent dangers. In the hour of defeat, which too surely arrived, his real greatness displayed itself; it was then that his dauntless spirit and unshaken firmness of soul enabled him to take advantage of all the resources that were yet available; to give his orders with the same composure and precision as if advancing to certain victory; and to convert the most disastrous rout into a safe and orderly retreat.

Considered as a politician, his capacity for government appeared in a very different light in his native country, where he was surrounded by able and zealous ministers, and in England, where he was left to depend more upon his own resources. In Holland he had merely to express his opinions,



WILLIAM III (1650-1701)

however crude, and a Fagel, a Beverning, a Dykeveldt, and a Heinsius — unquestionably the first statesmen and politicians in Europe — were ready to modify, to improve, and to render them suitable to the taste of the nation; in England, where he had few or none on whom he could depend for information and assistance and where the slightest influence gained over him by one party excited the jealousy and animosity of the other, he betrays an extreme deficiency in penetration, dexterity, and temper; and we can scarcely recognise, in the peevish monarch, threatening constantly to abandon his kingdom, and with it the noble cause he had espoused, the steady patriot who delivered his country from the miseries of foreign conquest and domestic sedition. Placed by circumstances

in the position of a restorer and defender of liberty, never was absolute monarch more fond of arbitrary power, or more impatient of even the most legitimate control.

In Holland, where, at the time of his accession to the stadholderate, the precarious condition of affairs rendered it necessary that unusual authority should be placed in his hands, we have seen him take advantage of it to introduce his dependents into every office of government without regard to their ability to fill them, and to trample under foot the ancient customs and privileges, interwoven in the welfare, almost in the very existence of his country. It may, indeed, be truly affirmed that, had he left a son, or succeeded in settling the inheritance on his relative John William Friso, the liberties of Holland were gone forever. In England, his anxiety to obtain a larger share of authority than the nation was willing to grant led him to appear ungrateful to those who had set him on the throne, and to inflict incalculable injury on his affairs by entrusting them to ministers of the tory party, whose maxims of government, as more favourable to royal prerogative, were more acceptable to him than those of the whigs; but whom he

never could succeed in reconciling to his person, or engage to serve him with fidelity.

But though his self-will and arbitrary temper might have inclined him to be a despot, not even these dispositions could ever have induced him to become a tyrant. Too magnanimous at once, and too indolent, to commit acts of injustice or oppression, he would have obtained absolute power only with a view to its upright and beneficial use. His lofty and noble ambition, exempt from the slightest alloy of vanity, rapacity, or cupidity, was directed to none but the most praiseworthy ends; to the glory and happiness of the countries he governed, to the preservation of the liberties and balance of Europe, and to the abasement of the overgrown power of France.

In steadiness of purpose he was unshaken; in scrupulous honour and integrity he was unsurpassed by any prince of the world; and forms, in this respect, a striking contrast, as well to the habitual insincerity of his predecessor Charles II as to the duplicity and faithlessness of his contemporary of France; of him it might be truly affirmed, as it was erroneously observed of his father-in-law, that his word was never broken. So high was the esteem in which he was universally held on this account, that the Spanish minister, De Lyra, was accustomed to say his master trusted more to the honour and constancy of the prince of Orange than to any treaties. A deep and fervent spirit of piety was in him united, in a remarkable manner, with sentiments of unbounded religious toleration.

Yet with many and great virtues, while he secured the esteem he failed to gain the affections of mankind. Raised to the sovereign power over two great nations, by the mere force of popular opinion, and hailed by both as their preserver and defender, he died disliked and unlamented by the one and rather respected than beloved by the other; a circumstance attributable chiefly to his cold and reserved manners and melancholy temperament, being but rarely excited to cheerfulness, and then only among a few of his most intimate friends.

But if he took no pains to acquire the love of men, he was equally little affected by their malice and enmity. The numerous attempts to assassinate him, persisted in during the whole course of his reign, never excited in him the slightest emotion of anger, revenge, or fear; firm in the belief of predestination instilled in his youth by his Calvinistic teachers, and which he carried into every, even the smallest, circumstance of his life, and fully persuaded that not all the power and arts of enemies could hasten his destiny one single moment, he was literally "not afraid of what man could do unto him." But though neither vindictive nor cruel, it may be doubted whether he hesitated to sacrifice the principles of humanity and justice when they stood in the way of the advancement of his interests or the gratification of his ambition. The murder of the De Witts and the massacre of Glencoe have cast upon his memory a stain which his panegyrists have in vain laboured to efface.

In both the instances in question, the impunity that William secured to the perpetrators of the crime, and the friendship and countenance with which he afterwards treated them, offered almost incontrovertible evidence of his guilty participation; and in the minds of posterity, unhappily, the remembrance of the defender of the civil and religious liberty of Europe is inseparably interwoven with that of the abettor of the murder of the illustrious De Witts and of the slaughter of the confiding Highlanders of Glencoe.

But, however exceptionable in some points the public character of William, in his domestic relations it shines out with a clear and undimmed lustre. His

purity of morals and general propriety of conduct contributed much to infuse a new tone and spirit into the society of England.

The consternation which prevailed in the United Provinces on the death of William was excessive, since, from the known prejudice of Queen Anne, his successor, against the whigs, nothing less was expected than that an immediate and entire change of measures in the English court and the dissolution of the Grand Alliance would leave them exposed to the whole vengeance of France. These fears were speedily relieved by the declaration of the views of the queen, who, within a week after her accession, dispatched the earl of Marlborough to assure the states of her determination to preserve all the alliances formed by the late king for the maintenance of the liberties of Europe, and the reduction of the power of France within just limits; and to regard the interests of her own kingdom and the states as inseparable. The states of Holland, on their side, passed a resolution that, notwithstanding the lamented death of the king of England, they were determined to remain firm to their allies, and prosecute the war with their whole strength and vigour; and, appearing in full number in the states-general, induced them to adopt a similar resolution. The treaty between Great Britain and the states was accordingly renewed, and the plan of the campaign projected by William III was concluded with the earl of Marlborough, who had been appointed general-in-chief of the English forces before the death of that monarch.

It was in the early part of the war that those dissensions sprang up between the duke of Marlborough and the states' deputies in the camp, which have called forth the bitterest invectives against the Dutch from the English writers, more especially his biographer, archdeacon Coxe.^e Marlborough was, for many reasons, anxious to make the Netherlands the principal scene of hostilities; while the states hoped, by acting chiefly on the defensive, and confining themselves to hindering the advance of the French troops, and to effecting the reduction of the towns which served best to protect the United Provinces against invasion, to impel the king of France to turn the strength of his arms to Germany, Italy, and Spain, and thus relieve provinces so near their own boundaries, in some measure, from the miseries of war.^c

THE STADHOLDERATE ABOLISHED (1704)

William was the last of that illustrious line which for a century and a half had filled Europe with admiration. He never had a child; and being himself an only one, his title as prince of Orange passed into another branch of the family. He left his cousin, Prince John William Friso of Nassau, the stadholder of Friesland, his sole and universal heir, and appointed the states-general his executors.^b

While the preparations for the ensuing campaign were in progress, animated debates arose in the states-general on the subject of the appointment of a commander of the troops. The states of Friesland and Groningen insisted that their young stadholder, John William Friso, should be created general of the infantry; a demand strenuously opposed by the remaining provinces. The states of Zealand, accordingly, objected that, in the present condition of affairs, it was necessary to have a general, not nominal only, such as the tender age of the prince would render him, but of mature years and experience; and that his advancement would be only the first step to the renewal of that form of government which neither themselves nor the other states would willingly see restored. A compromise was at length

[1701-1704 A.D.]

effected, according to which John William Friso was appointed general of the infantry, but was not to exercise the duties nor enjoy the emoluments of the office till he had completed his twentieth year.

The states were probably rendered the more reluctant to adopt any measure which might tend to advance Prince John William Friso to the stadholdership, from the circumstance of the will, by which William III had appointed him his sole heir, being disputed by the king of Prussia, grandson by the mother's side of the stadholder Frederick Henry, who had bequeathed the inheritance to the heirs of his daughter, in default of the issue of his son. In order, therefore, to prevent the indulgence of any hopes which the Orange party might conceive from this favour shown to the prince, the states of Holland were the first to propose in the states-general that those of the individual provinces should take an oath, each deputy separately, to preserve the union of the provinces without a stadholder, and to maintain steadily all the alliances in which they were at present engaged.

On this occasion the states of Holland, instead of sending their deputies as usual, appeared in person, and in full number, in the states-general, a mode to which they constantly afterwards adhered, and which procured for them a weight and influence in the federal government superior even to that formerly enjoyed by the stadholders. The senates and councils of the towns resumed the right of nominating their own members, a change which in Holland was effected without disturbance; but in Utrecht, Gelderland, and Overryssel, where "the regulations"—the terms, that is, on which these provinces had been received back into the union after their conquest by the king of France—were of such a nature as to give the late stadholder opportunities for the exercise of exorbitant power, the struggles between the party whom he had sedulously excluded from public offices, and those whom long possession had rendered doubly anxious to retain them, were frequent and severe.

Ultimately, however, the changes in the municipal bodies were almost universally favourable to the existing government, and the constitution of the five provinces settled itself on pretty nearly the same basis as after the death of William II in 1650. The principal and most difficult duty of the stadholder, that of persuading the provinces to agree to the subsidies demanded by the council of state, was now fulfilled by the states of Holland through the medium of their pensionary, whose office thus acquired new dignity and importance, while his influence became more extensive in the states-general.¹ The deliberations which, since the death of the stadholder, had been tardy and vacillating, now gradually assumed a character of greater firmness and vigour; and never, perhaps, were the measures of the government more distinguished by wisdom, energy, and justice, than during the latter years of the war.^c

THE TRIUMVIRATE AGAINST FRANCE

The joy in France at William's death was proportionate to the grief it created in Holland; and the arrogant confidence of Louis seemed to know no bounds. "I will punish these audacious merchants," said he, with an air of disdain, when he read the manifesto of Holland; not foreseeing that those he affected to despise so much would, ere long, command in a great

¹ The influence of the states of Holland in the states-general was obtained chiefly by a custom they had of advancing money to the poorer provinces, when unable to pay their quotas to the generality; and, in the same way, Amsterdam was accustomed to exercise a preponderance over the smaller towns in the states of Holland.

measure the destinies of his crown. Many of the northern princes were withheld, by various motives, from entering into the contest with France, and its whole brunt devolved on the original members of the grand alliance. The generals who carried it on were Marlborough and Prince Eugene. The former, at its commencement an earl, and subsequently raised to the dignity of duke, was declared generalissimo of the Dutch and English forces. He was a man of most powerful genius, both as warrior and politician. A pupil of the great Turenne, his exploits left those of his master in the shade. No commander ever possessed in a greater degree the faculty of forming vast designs, and of carrying them into effect with consummate skill; no one displayed more coolness and courage in action, saw with a keener eye the errors of the enemy, or knew better how to profit by success. He never laid siege to a town that he did not take, and never fought a battle that he did not gain.

Prince Eugene joined to the highest order of personal bravery a profound judgment for the grand movements of war, and a capacity for the most minute of the minor details on which their successful issue so often depends. United in the same cause, these two great generals pursued their course without the least misunderstanding. At the close of each of those successive campaigns, in which they reaped such a full harvest of renown, they retired together to the Hague, to arrange, in the profoundest secrecy, the plans for the next year's operations, with one other person, who formed the great point of union between them, and completed a triumvirate without a parallel in the history of political affairs. This third was Heinsius, one of those great men produced by the republic whose names are tantamount to the most detailed eulogium for talent and patriotism. Every enterprise projected by the confederates was deliberately examined, rejected, or approved by these three associates, whose strict union of purpose, disowning all party rivalry, formed the centre of counsels and the source of circumstances finally so fatal to France.

The war began in 1702 in Italy, and Marlborough opened his first campaign in Brabant also in that year. For several succeeding years the confederates pursued a career of brilliant success, the details of which do not properly belong to this portion of our history. Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde, and Malplaquet, are names that speak for themselves, and tell their own tale of glory. The utter humiliation of France was the result of events in which England was joined in the strictest union with Holland, and the impetuous valour of the successor to the title of prince of Orange was, on many occasions, particularly at Malplaquet, supported by the devotion and gallantry of the Dutch contingent in the allied armies. The naval affairs of Holland offered nothing very remarkable. The states had always a fleet ready to support the English in their enterprises; but no eminent admiral arose to rival the renown of Rooke, Byng, Benbow, and others of their allies. The first of those admirals took Gibraltar, which has ever since remained in the possession of England.¹ The great earl of Peterborough carried on the war with splendid success in Portugal and Spain, supported occasionally by the English fleet under Sir Cloudesley Shovel, and that of Holland under admirals Alloumonde and Wapenaer.

During the progress of the war, the haughty and long-time imperial Louis was reduced to a state of humiliation that excited a compassion so profound

¹ The queen of England at first appeared inclined to acknowledge a joint-possession with the states of this conquest, achieved by their united arms; but she afterwards changed her purpose, and the English finally assumed the sole occupation of Gibraltar, without any indemnification to the states, who, reluctant to alienate so valuable an ally by insisting on the share so justly due to them, quietly acquiesced in the usurpation.

[1709-1712 A.D.]

as to prevent its own open expression. In the year 1709 he solicited peace on terms of most abject submission. The states-general, under the influence of the duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene, rejected all his supplications, retorting unsparingly the insolent harshness with which he had formerly received similar proposals from them. In the following year Louis renewed his attempts to obtain some tolerable conditions; offering to renounce his grandson, and to comply with all the former demands of the confederates. Even these overtures were rejected; Holland and England appearing satisfied with nothing short of, what was after all impracticable, the total destruction of the great power which Louis had so long proved to be incompatible with their welfare.^b

TROUBLE WITH ENGLAND

Yet events had long been preparing in England which were to change entirely the face of affairs on the Continent, and deprive the states, and even Great Britain herself, in some measure, of the fruits of their numerous and dearly-bought victories. The dismissal of the whig ministers in 1710, followed in 1711 by the dismissal of Marlborough, was a measure regarded with as much dismay by the allies (of whom the emperor and states ventured to petition the queen in earnest terms against it), as with secret triumph and exultation by France. Louis, indeed, had everything to hope from the new administration, composed entirely of tories, whom all the glory of their country's arms failed to reconcile to the war, and who constantly viewed both the Dutch nation itself and the alliance of the states with jealousy and aversion.

The queen of England having sent circulars to the allied sovereigns, inviting them to the congress at Utrecht, ambassadors from nearly all the courts of Europe appeared in that city early in the year 1712. The instructions given to those of England, as regarded the United Provinces, seemed rather as though directed against enemies than in favour of allies whose interests she was bound to maintain equally with her own.

The Dutch felt still more painfully the effects of the altered sentiments of England in the course of the campaign. Secret orders were sent to Marlborough's successor, the duke of Ormonde, to take no part in any siege or battle. Thus enfeebled by the desertion of the English, a detachment of the allied army sustained a severe defeat at Denain. The truce between France and England was renewed and Bolingbroke was sent to France with instructions to conclude a separate peace.

These events — more especially the seizure of Ghent by the English, which enabled them to stop the supplies to the allied camp — were attended with the effect which the ministers anticipated, of reducing the allies to submission to such terms as England and France might impose. The negotiations at Utrecht were resumed on the basis proposed by the queen in her speech to her parliament at the opening of the session. Herein she had declared that the barrier provided for the states should be the same as that of the treaty of 1709, with the exception of two or three places at most — a point which gave rise to many and animated contests.

At length the queen having obtained from France the addition of Tournay to the barrier towns, the states were fain to receive peace upon such other conditions as were offered them. They signed a new treaty with England, annulling that of 1709, and providing that the emperor Charles should be sovereign of the Spanish Netherlands, which, neither in the whole nor in part, should ever be possessed by France.

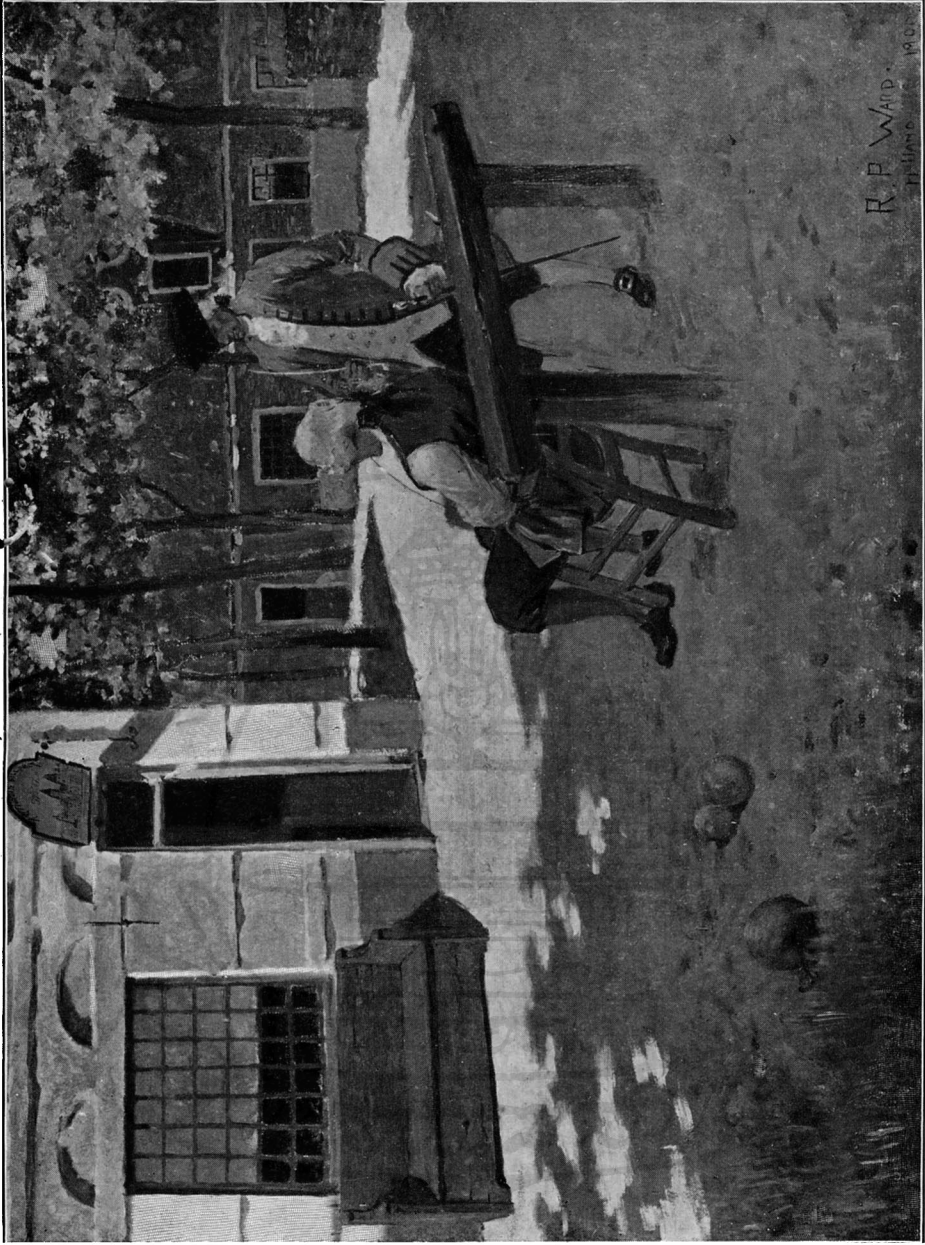
THE TREATY OF UTRECHT (1713) AND THE BARRIER TREATY (1715)

Difficulties being thus smoothed, the declaration made by the English plenipotentiaries of their determination to sign on a certain day, whether with or without the allies, hastened the decision of the latter, with the exception of the emperor. Portugal, Russia, and, last of all, the states, followed the example of England. By the treaty concluded between France and the states, it was agreed that the king of France should surrender to them the Spanish Netherlands, on behalf of the house of Austria, the elector of Bavaria being reinstated in all the territories he possessed before the war. The towns of Menin, Tournay, Namur, Ypres, with Warneton, Poperinghe, Comines and Wervicq, Furnes, Dixmude, and the fort of Knokke, were to be ceded to the states, as a barrier, to be held in such a manner as they should afterwards agree upon with the emperor. France and the states mutually bound themselves to do no act which should tend to unite the crowns of Spain and France on one head.

The publication of the peace was received by the people in the United Provinces with coldness, and even aversion; they declared that the illuminations and bonfires, with which the states ordered the event to be celebrated, ought to be called, not *feux de joie*, but *feux d'artifice*; and inveighed bitterly against the English ministry, whom the corrupt influence of France alone, according to the vulgar opinion, had prompted to conclude a war the most glorious and successful ever waged in Europe by a degrading and injurious peace.

The effects of the favourable dispositions of the court of England, and the altered sentiments of France towards the states, were soon perceptible in the negotiations with the emperor concerning the regulation of the barrier, which, since the Peace of Utrecht, had given rise to long and angry contestations. The emperor had hitherto refused their demand of the demolition of Fort Philip and the cession of Dendermonde; but, now that he found they had the support of England and France, he yielded so far as to consent that the states should keep a joint garrison with himself in that town; he abandoned his claim to Venlo and Stevenswaard, on which he had before insisted, and by the Treaty of the Barrier, November 15th, 1715, permitted the boundary on the side of Flanders to be fixed in a manner highly satisfactory to the states, who sought security rather than extent of dominion. By the possession of Namur they commanded the passage of the Sambre and Maas; Tournay ensured the navigation of the Schelde; Menin and Warneton protected the Lys; while Ypres and the fort of Knokke kept open the communication with Furnes, Nieuport, and Dunkirk. Events proved the barrier, so earnestly insisted on, to have been wholly insufficient as a means of defence to the United Provinces, and scarcely worth the labour and cost of its maintenance.

Henceforward, with the exception of a triple alliance concluded with France and England in the next year, the states during a considerable period interested themselves slightly, or not at all in the numerous treaties which the different powers of Europe, as if seized with the mania of diplomacy, were continually negotiating — often, it would seem, without any special cause or definite purpose. Neither did they take any share in the wars between Spain and France, or between Spain and Great Britain — effects of the restless ambition of the Spanish minister, Cardinal Alberoni — further than to furnish such subsidies to the new English king, George I, as were expressly stipulated by treaty.



A DUTCH INN AND BOWLING GREEN IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

(From the painting by Philipps Ward)

[1716-1722 A.D.]

THE DECLINE OF HOLLAND

It was in some measure in disgust at the treatment they had experienced at the hands of their more powerful allies during the negotiations at Utrecht that they thus withdrew themselves from the political affairs of Europe; and yet more from their inability to sustain longer the high position among nations which had, by common consent, been awarded them. The efforts they had made to carry on the last long and expensive war had been far above their strength. The province of Holland alone had incurred a debt of 19,000,000 guilders, and most of the others were wholly unable to furnish their quotas to the generality.

The integrity of the union, appeared threatened by the failure of the provinces in the payment of their quotas. As well for this cause as to rectify some abuses existing in the constitution, among which those of bribery and corruption stood predominant, it was determined to summon an extraordinary assembly of the states in the same manner as in the year 1651. But on this occasion an increasing supineness in the performance of their political duties, a deficiency both of ability and energy for self-government, and a decay of mutual confidence, first strikingly displayed themselves in the Dutch people.

As even the business of providing funds to meet the present exigencies remained unattended to, the states-general found themselves obliged, by the exhausted state of their treasury, to make an infringement on public credit, comparatively slight indeed, but of ominous portent in a state so scrupulously exact on that point, in raising funds by means of a tax of a hundredth penny on the bonds of the generality for three years. The states attempted no other answer to the loud and general murmurs of the bondholders than the plea of urgent and overwhelming necessity. They likewise reduced their military establishment to the number of thirty-four thousand men.

In 1720 died the celebrated pensionary of Holland, Antonius Heinsius, having served that office for terms of five years consecutively since 1689; a man to whom friend and opponent have agreed in awarding the praise of consummate wisdom, indefatigable industry, ardent patriotism, and incorruptible integrity. It was, perhaps, the loss of this able and influential minister which caused, among a portion of the people of the United Provinces, a renewed desire to behold the restoration of the stadholderate. There was, however, at this time, no prince of the family of Nassau-Orange of an age to aspire to that office, the prince John William Friso having been drowned in 1711 in crossing the ferry at Moerdijk. His son, William Charles Henry Friso, born a few weeks after his death, was hereditary stadholder of Friesland, and had, in 1718, at the age of seven, been created stadholder of Groningen, on the same terms as his ancestors had enjoyed that dignity. He had scarcely attained his eleventh year when the partisans of the house of Orange in Gelderland made strenuous efforts to procure his elevation to the stadholdership of that province, and with so great success that the states were summoned to consider the question before the other provinces were aware of the existence of any such design.

The states of Holland and Zealand quickly took the alarm, and, by earnest remonstrances and vivid representations of the evil consequences that must ensue from their surrendering any portion of their sovereignty, endeavoured to deter the states of Gelderland from their purpose. Their efforts were, however, fruitless.

In all disputes between the several quarters of the province, or between the

[1722 A.D.]

estates of the nobility and towns, they were, in default of a stadholder, obliged to have recourse to the interference of the states-general. Hence that body, or rather the states of Holland, whose supremacy was tacitly admitted by the rest, took occasion to assume and exercise greater influence in their affairs than they were inclined either to admit or endure. Should they appoint a stadholder all such differences must be submitted to his decision, and thus the states-general be excluded from intermeddling.

This consideration it was that induced many of the deputies to the Gelderland states to accede to a measure they might otherwise have been disposed to thwart; and they accordingly elected unanimously the young prince stadholder, captain, and admiral-general of Gelderland (1722). Yet they plainly evinced their dread lest the stadholderal power should become as dangerous as it had before been to the liberties of their country, by the narrow limits within which they confined it. Short as it was of its lustre, the restoration of the stadholderate in Gelderland was hailed with joy by the Orange party as the first step towards a return to a similar form of government in the remaining four provinces; yet some years elapsed, and a vast change of circumstances occurred, before they found themselves in sufficient strength to carry that measure.^c

