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### **Letters On The Study And Use Of History**

**Bolingbroke, Henry St. John**

**London, 1752**

Letter VII. A sketch of the state and history of Europe from the Pyrenean treaty in one thousand six hundred and fifty-nine, to the year one thousand six hundred and eighty-eight.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-51142](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-51142)

## LETTER VII.

*A sketch of the state and history of Europe from the Pyrenean treaty in one thousand six hundred and fifty-nine, to the year one thousand six hundred and eighty-eight.*

THE first observation I shall make on this third period of modern history is, that as the ambition of CHARLES the fifth, who united the whole formidable power of Austria in himself, and the restless temper, the cruelty and bigotry of PHILIP the second, were principally objects of the attention and solicitude of the councils of Europe, in the first of these periods; and as the ambition of FERDINAND the second, and the third, who aimed at nothing less than extirpating the protestant interest, and under that pretence subduing the liberties of Germany, were objects of the same

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kind in the second: so an opposition to the growing power of France, or to speak more properly to the exorbitant ambition of the house of Bourbon, has been the principal affair of Europe, during the greatest part of the present period. The design of aspiring to universal monarchy was imputed to CHARLES the fifth, as soon as he began to give proofs of his ambition and capacity. The same design was imputed to LEWIS the fourteenth, as soon as he began to feel his own strength, and the weakness of his neighbours. Neither of these princes was induced, I believe, by the flattery of his courtiers, or the apprehensions of his adversaries, to entertain so chimerical a design as this would have been, even in that false sense wherein the word universal is so often understood: and I mistake very much if either of them was of a character, or in circumstances, to undertake it. Both of them had strong desires to raise their families higher, and to extend



tend their dominions farther ; but neither of them had that bold and adventurous ambition which makes a conqueror and an hero. These apprehensions however were given wisely, and taken usefully. They cannot be given nor taken too soon when such powers as these arise ; because when such powers as these are besieged as it were early, by the common policy and watchfulness of their neighbours, each of them may in his turn of strength fall forth, and gain a little ground ; but none of them will be able to push their conquests far, and much less to consummate the entire projects of their ambition. Besides the occasional opposition that was given to CHARLES the fifth by our HENRY the eighth, according to the different moods of humor he was in ; by the popes, according to the several turns of their private interest ; and by the princes of Germany, according to the occasions or pretences that religion or civil liberty furnished ; he had



from his first setting out a rival and an enemy in FRANCIS the first, who did not maintain his cause in forma pauperis, if I may use such an expression: as we have seen the house of Austria sue, in our days, for dominion at the gate of every palace in Europe. FRANCIS the first was the principal in his own quarrels, paid his own armies, fought his own battles; and tho his valour alone did not hinder CHARLES the fifth from subduing all Europe, as BAYLE, a better philologer than politician, somewhere asserts, but a multitude of other circumstances easily to be traced in history; yet he contributed by his victories, and even by his defeats, to waste the strength and check the course of that growing power. LEWIS the fourteenth had no rival of this kind in the house of Austria, nor indeed any enemy of this importance to combat, till the prince of ORANGE became king of Great-Britain: and he had great advantages in many other respects, which it is necessary  
to



to consider in order to make a true judgment on the affairs of Europe from the year one thousand six hundred and sixty. You will discover the first of these advantages, and such as were productive of all the rest, in the conduct of RICHELIEU and of MAZARIN. RICHELIEU formed the great design, and laid the foundations: MAZARIN pursued the design, and raised the superstructure. If I do not deceive myself extremely, there are few passages in history that deserve your lordship's attention more than the conduct that the first and greatest of these ministers held, in laying the foundations I speak of. You will observe how he helped to embroil affairs on every side, and to keep the house of Austria at bay as it were; how he entered into the quarrels of Italy against Spain, into that concerning the Valteline, and that concerning the succession of Mantua; without engaging so deep as to divert him from another great object of his policy, subdu-  
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ing Rochelle and disarming the Huguenots. You will observe how he turned himself, after this was done, to stop the progress of FERDINAND in Germany. Whilst Spain fomented discontents at the court and disorders in the kingdom of France, by all possible means, even by taking engagements with the duke of Rohan, and for supporting the protestants; RICHELIEU abetted the same interest in Germany against FERDINAND; and in the Low Countries against Spain. The emperor was become almost the master in Germany. CHRISTIAN the fourth, king of Denmark, had been at the head of a league, wherein the United Provinces, Sweden, and lower Saxony entered to oppose his progress: but CHRISTIAN had been defeated by TILLY and VALSTEIN, and obliged to conclude a treaty at Lubec, where FERDINAND gave him the law. It was then that GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS, with whom RICHELIEU made an alliance, entered into this war  
and



and soon turned the fortune of it. The French minister had not yet engaged his master openly in the war; but when the Dutch grew impatient and threatned to renew their truce with Spain, unless France declared; when the king of Sweden was killed and the battle of Nordlingen lost; when Saxony had turned again to the side of the emperor, and Brandenburg and so many others had followed this example, that Hesse almost alone persisted in the Swedish alliance: then RICHELIEU engaged his master, and profited of every circumstance which the conjuncture afforded, to engage him with advantage. For first he had a double advantage by engaging so late: that of coming fresh into the quarrel against a wearied and almost exhausted enemy; and that of yielding to the impatience of his friends, who pressed by their necessities and by the want they had of France, gave this minister an opportunity of laying those claims and establishing those preten-



pretensions, in all his treaties with Holland, Sweden, and the princes and states of the empire, on which he had projected the future aggrandisement of France. The manner in which he engaged, and the air that he gave to his engagement, were advantages of the second sort, advantages of reputation and credit; yet were these of no small moment in the course of the war, and operated strongly in favour of France as he designed they should, even after his death, and at and after the treaties of Westphalia. He varnished ambition with the most plausible and popular pretences. The elector of Treves had put himself under the protection of France; and, if I remember right, he made this step when the emperor could not protect him against the Swedes, whom he had reason to apprehend. No matter, the governor of Luxemburg was ordered to surprize Treves and to seize the elector. He executed his orders with success, and carried this prince prisoner into Brabant.

RICHELIEU



RICHÉLIEU seized the lucky circumstance; he reclaimed the elector: and, on the refusal of the cardinal Infant, the war was declared. France, you see, appeared the common friend of liberty, the defender of it in the Low Countries against the king of Spain, and in Germany against the emperor, as well as the protector of the princes of the empire, many of whose states had been illegally invaded, and whose persons were no longer safe from violence even in their own palaces. All these appearances were kept up in the negotiations at Munster, where MAZARIN reaped what RICHÉLIEU had sowed. The demands that France made for herself were very great; but the conjuncture was favourable, and she improved it to the utmost. No figure could be more flattering than her's, at the head of these negotiations; nor more mortifying than the emperor's through the whole course of the treaty. The princes and states of the empire had been  
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treated as vassals by the emperor : France determined them to treat with him on this occasion as sovereigns, and supported them in this determination. Whilst Sweden seemed concerned for the protestant interest alone, and shewed no other regard as she had no other alliance ; France affected to be impartial alike to the protestant and to the papist, and to have no interest at heart but the common interest of the Germanic body. Her demands were excessive, but they were to be satisfied principally out of the emperor's patrimonial dominions. It had been the art of her ministers to establish this general maxim on many particular experiences, that the grandeur of France was a real, and would be a constant security to the rights and liberties of the empire against the emperor : and it is no wonder therefore, this maxim prevailing, injuries, resentments and jealousies being fresh on one side, and services, obligations and confidence on the other, that the Germans

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mans were not unwilling France should extend her empire on this side of the Rhine, whilst Sweden did the same on this side of the Baltic. These treaties, and the immense credit and influence that France had acquired by them in the empire, put it out of the power of one branch of the house of Austria to return the obligations of assistance to the other, in the war that continued between France and Spain, till the Pyrenean treaty. By this treaty the superiority of the house of Bourbon over the house of Austria was not only completed and confirmed, but the great design of uniting the Spanish and the French monarchies under the former was laid.

THE third period therefore begins by a great change of the balance of power in Europe, and by the prospect of one much greater and more fatal. Before I descend into the particulars I intend to mention, of the course of affairs, and of  
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the political conduct of the great powers of Europe in this third period; give me leave to cast my eyes once more back on the second. The reflection I am going to make seems to me important, and leads to all that is to follow.

THE Dutch made their peace separately at Munster with Spain, who acknowledged then the sovereignty and independency of their commonwealth. The French, who had been, after our ELIZABETH, their principal support, reproached them severely for this breach of faith. They excused themselves in the best manner, and by the best reasons, they could. All this your lordship will find in the monuments of that time. But I think it not improbable that they had a motive you will not find there, and which it was not proper to give as a reason or excuse to the French. Might not the wise men amongst them consider even then, besides the immediate advantages



tages that accrued by this treaty to their commonwealth, that the imperial power was fallen ; that the power of Spain was vastly reduced ; that the house of Austria was nothing more than the shadow of a great name, and that the house of Bourbon was advancing, by large strides, to a degree of power as exorbitant, and as formidable as that of the other family had been in the hands of CHARLES the fifth, of PHILIP the second, and lately of the two FERDINANDS ? Might they not foresee even then what happened in the course of very few years, when they were obliged for their own security to assist their old enemies the Spaniards against their old friends the French ? I think they might. Our CHARLES the first was no great politician, and yet he seemed to discern that the balance of power was turning in favour of France, some years before the treaties of Westphalia. He refused to be neuter, and threatened to take part with Spain, if the



French pursued the design of besieging Dunkirk and Graveline, according to a concert taken between them and the Dutch, and in pursuance of a treaty for dividing the Spanish Low Countries, which RICHELIEU had negotiated. CROMWELL either did not discern this turn of the balance of power, long afterwards when it was much more visible; or, discerning it, he was induced by reasons of private interest to act against the general interest of Europe. CROMWELL joined with France against Spain, and tho he got Jamaica and Dunkirk, he drove the Spaniards into a necessity of making a peace with France, that has disturbed the peace of the world almost fourscore years, and the consequences of which have well-nigh beggared in our times the nation he enslaved in his. There is a tradition, I have heard it from persons who lived in those days, and I believe it came from THURLO, that CROMWELL was in treaty with Spain, and ready to turn



turn his arms against France when he died. If this fact was certain, as little as I honor his memory, I should have some regret that he died so soon. But whatever his intentions were, we must charge the Pyrenean treaty, and the fatal consequences of it, in great measure to his account. The Spaniards abhorred the thought of marrying their Infanta to LEWIS the fourteenth. It was on this point that they broke the negotiation LIONNE had begun: and your lordship will perceive, that if they resumed it afterwards, and offered the marriage they had before rejected, CROMWELL's league with France was a principal inducement to this alteration of their resolutions.

THE precise point at which the scales of power turn, like that of the solstice in either tropic, is imperceptible to common observation: and, in one case as in the other, some progress must be made in the new direction, before the change



is perceived. They who are in the sinking scale, for in the political balance of power, unlike to all others, the scale that is empty sinks, and that which is full rises; they who are in the sinking scale do not easily come off from the habitual prejudices of superior wealth or power, or skill or courage, nor from the confidence that these prejudices inspire. They who are in the rising scale do not immediately feel their strength, nor assume that confidence in it which successful experience gives them afterwards. They who are the most concerned to watch the variations of this balance, misjudge often in the same manner, and from the same prejudices. They continue to dread a power no longer able to hurt them; or they continue to have no apprehensions of a power that grows daily more formidable. Spain verified the first observation at the end of the second period, when proud and poor, and enterprising and feeble, she still thought herself

self



self a match for France. France verified the second observation at the beginning of the third period, when the triple alliance stopped the progress of her arms, which alliances much more considerable were not able to effect afterwards. The other principal powers of Europe, in their turns, have verified the third observation in both its parts, through the whole course of this period.

WHEN LEWIS the fourteenth took the administration of affairs into his own hands, about the year one thousand six hundred and sixty, he was in the prime of his age, and had what princes seldom have, the advantages of youth and those of experience together. Their education is generally bad; for which reason royal birth, that gives a right to the throne among other people, gave an absolute exclusion from it among the Mamelukes. His was in all respects, except one, as bad as that of other princes. He



jested sometimes on his own ignorance, and there were other defects in his character owing to his education, which he did not see. But MAZARIN had initiated him betimes in the mysteries of his policy. He had seen a great part of those foundations laid, on which he was to raise the fabric of his future grandeur: and as MAZARIN finished the work that RICHELIEU began, he had the lessons of one, and the examples of both, to instruct him. He had acquired habits of secrecy and method, in business; of reserve, discretion, decency and dignity, in behaviour. If he was not the greatest king, he was the best actor of majesty at least that ever filled a throne. He by no means wanted that courage which is commonly called bravery, tho the want of it was imputed to him in the midst of his greatest triumphs: nor that other courage, less ostentatious and more rarely found, calm, steady, persevering resolution; which seems to arise less from the temper

temper



temper of the body, and is therefore called courage of the mind. He had them both most certainly, and I could produce unquestionable anecdotes in proof. He was in one word much superior to any prince with whom he had to do, when he began to govern. He was surrounded with great captains bred in former wars, and with great ministers bred in the same school as himself. They who had worked under MAZARIN, worked on the same plan under him; and as they had the advantages of genius and experience over most of the ministers of other countries, so they had another advantage over those who were equal or superior to them: the advantage of serving a master whose absolute power was established; and the advantage of a situation wherein they might exert their whole capacity without contradiction; over that, for instance, wherein your lordship's great grandfather was placed, at the same time in England, and JOHN DE WIT in Holland.



Among these ministers, COLBERT must be mentioned particularly upon this occasion; because it was he who improved the wealth, and consequently the power of France extremely, by the order he put into the finances, and by the encouragement he gave to trade and manufactures. The soil, the climate, the situation of France, the ingenuity, the industry, the vivacity of her inhabitants are such; she has so little want of the product of other countries, and other countries have so many real or imaginary wants to be supplied by her; that when she is not at war with all her neighbours, when her domestic quiet is preserved and any tolerable administration of government prevails, she must grow rich at the expence of those who trade, and even of those who do not open a trade, with her. Her bawbles, her modes, the follies and extravagancies of her luxury, cost England, about the time we are speaking of, little less than eight hundred thousand

thousand



thousand pounds sterling a year, and other nations in their proportions. COLBERT made the most of all these advantageous circumstances, and whilst he filled the national sponge, he taught his successors how to squeeze it; a secret that he repented having discovered, they say, when he saw the immense sums that were necessary to supply the growing magnificence of his master.

THIS was the character of LEWIS the fourteenth, and this was the state of his kingdom at the beginning of the present period. If his power was great, his pretensions were still greater. He had renounced, and the infant with his consent had renounced, all right to the succession of Spain, in the strongest terms that the precaution of the councils of Madrid could contrive. No matter; he consented to these renunciations, but your lordship will find by the letters of MAZARIN and by other memorials, that he

acted



acted on the contrary principle, from the first, which he avowed soon afterwards. Such a power, and such pretensions, should have given, one would think, an immediate alarm to the rest of Europe. PHILIP the fourth was broken and decayed, like the monarchy he governed. One of his sons died, as I remember, during the negotiations that preceded the year one thousand six hundred and sixty: and the survivor, who was CHARLES the second, rather languished than lived from the cradle to the grave. So dangerous a contingency, therefore, as the union of the two monarchies of France and Spain being in view forty years together; one would imagine, that the principal powers of Europe had the means of preventing it constantly in view during the same time. But it was otherwise. France acted very systematically from the year one thousand six hundred and sixty, to the death of king CHARLES the second of Spain. She never lost sight of her great



great object, the succession to the whole Spanish monarchy; and she accepted the will of the king of Spain in favour of the duke of Anjou. As she never lost sight of her great object during this time, so she lost no opportunity of increasing her power, while she waited for that of succeeding in her pretensions. The two branches of Austria were in no condition of making a considerable opposition to her designs and attempts. Holland, who of all other powers was the most concerned to oppose them, was at that time under two influences that hindered her from pursuing her true interest. Her true interest was to have used her utmost endeavours to unite closely and intimately with England on the restoration of king CHARLES. She did the very contrary. JOHN DE WIT, at the head of the Louvestein faction, governed. The interest of his party was to keep the house of Orange down: he courted therefore the friendship of France, and neglected that of England.



England. The alliance between our nation and the Dutch was renewed, I think, in one thousand six hundred and sixty-two; but the latter had made a defensive league with France a little before, on the supposition principally of a war with England. The war became inevitable very soon. CROMWELL had chastised them for their usurpations in trade and the outrages and cruelties they had committed; but he had not cured them. The same spirit continued in the Dutch, the same resentments in the English: and the pique of merchants became the pique of nations. France entered into the war on the side of Holland; but the little assistance she gave the Dutch shewed plain enough that her intention was to make these two powers waste their strength against one another, whilst she extended her conquests in the Spanish Low Countries. Her invasion of these provinces obliged DE WIT to change his conduct. Hitherto he had been attached to France in  
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the closest manner, had led his republic to serve all the purposes of France, and had renewed with the marshal D'ESTRADES a project of dividing the Spanish Netherlands between France and Holland, that had been taken up formerly, when RICHELIEU made use of it to flatter their ambition, and to engage them to prolong the war against Spain. A project not unlike to that which was held out to them by the famous preliminaries, and the extravagant barrier-treaty, in one thousand seven hundred and nine; and which engaged them to continue a war on the principle of ambition, into which they had entered with more reasonable and more moderate views.

As the private interests of the two DE WITS hindered that common-wealth from being on her guard, as early as she ought to have been against France; so the mistaken policy of the court of England, and the short views, and the profuse



profuse temper of the prince who governed, gave great advantages to LEWIS the fourteenth in the pursuit of his designs. He bought Dunkirk: and your lordship knows how great a clamour was raised on that occasion against your noble ancestor; as if he alone had been answerable for the measure, and his interest had been concerned in it. I have heard our late friend Mr. GEORGE CLARK quote a witness, who was quite unexceptionable, but I cannot recal his name at present, who many years after all these transactions, and the death of my lord CLARENDON, affirmed, that the earl of Sandwich had owned to him, that he himself gave his opinion among many others, officers, and ministers, for selling Dunkirk. Their reasons could not be good, I presume to say; but several that might be plausible at that time are easily guessed. A Prince like King CHARLES, who would have made as many bad bargains



as any young spendthrift for money, finding himself thus backed, we may assure ourselves was peremptorily determined to sell: and whatever your great grandfather's opinion was, this I am able to pronounce upon my own experience, that his treaty for the sale is no proof he was of opinion to sell. When the resolution of selling was once taken, to whom could the sale be made? to the Dutch? No. This measure would have been at least as impolitic, and in that moment perhaps more odious than the other. To the Spaniards? They were unable to buy: and as low as their power was sunk, the principle of opposing it still prevailed. I have sometimes thought that the Spaniards, who were forced to make peace with Portugal and to renounce all claim to that crown, four or five years afterwards, might have been induced to take this resolution then; if the regaining Dunkirk without any expence had been a condition proposed to them: and that  
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the Portuguese, who notwithstanding their alliance with England and the indirect succours that France afforded them, were little able, after the treaty especially, to support a war against Spain, might have been induced to pay the price of Dunkirk; for so great an advantage as immediate peace with Spain, and the extinction of all foreign pretences on their crown. But this speculation, concerning events so long ago passed, is not much to the purpose here. I proceed therefore to observe that notwithstanding the sale of Dunkirk, and the secret leanings of our court to that of France, yet England was first to take the alarm, when LEWIS the fourteenth invaded the Spanish Netherlands in one thousand six hundred and sixty seven: and the triple alliance was the work of an English Minister. It was time to take this alarm; for from the moment that the king of France claimed a right to the county of Burgundy, the dutchy of Brabant, and other portions



portions of the low countries, as devolved on his queen by the death of her father PHILIP the fourth, he pulled off the mask entirely. Volumes were writ to establish, and to refute this supposed right. Your lordship no doubt will look into a controversy that has employed so many pens and so many swords; and I believe you will think it was sufficiently bold in the French, to argue from customs, that regulated the course of private successions in certain provinces, to a right of succeeding to the sovereignty of those provinces: and to assert the divisibility of the Spanish monarchy, with the same breath with which they asserted the indivisibility of their own; altho the proofs in one case were just as good as the proofs in the other, and the fundamental law of indivisibility was at least as good a law in Spain, as either this or the salique law was in France. But however proper it might be for the French and Austrian pens to enter into long discussions, and



to appeal on this great occasion to the rest of Europe; the rest of Europe had a short objection to make to the plea of France, which no sophisms, no quirks of law could evade. Spain accepted the renunciations as a real security: France gave them as such to Spain, and in effect to the rest of Europe. If they had not been thus given and thus taken, the Spaniards would not have married their Infanta to the king of France, whatever distress they might have endured by the prolongation of the war. These renunciations were renunciations of all rights whatsoever to the whole Spanish monarchy, and to every part of it. The provinces claimed by France at this time were parts of it. To claim them, was therefore to claim the whole; for if the renunciations were no bar to the rights accruing to MARY THERESA on the death of her father PHILIP the fourth, neither could they be any to the rights that would accrue to her and her children, on the



death of her brother CHARLES the second: an unhealthful youth, and who at this instant was in immediate danger of dying; for to all the complicated distempers he brought into the world with him, the small-pox was added. Your lordship sees how the fatal contingency of uniting the two monarchies of France and Spain stared mankind in the face; and yet nothing that I can remember was done to prevent it: not so much as a guaranty given, or a declaration made, to assert the validity of these renunciations, and for securing the effect of them. The triple alliance indeed stopped the progress of the French arms, and produced the treaty of Aix la Chapelle. But England, Sweden, and Holland, the contracting powers in this alliance, seemed to look, and probably did look, no farther. France kept a great and important part of what she had surprized, or ravished, or purchased; for we cannot say with any propriety that she conquered: and the



Spaniards were obliged to set all they saved to the account of gain. The German branch of Austria had been reduced very low in power and in credit under FERDINAND the third, by the treaties of Westphalia, as I have said already. LEWIS the fourteenth maintained, during many years, the influence these treaties had given him among the princes and states of the empire. The famous capitulation made at Frankfort on the election of LEOPOLD, who succeeded FERDINAND about the year one thousand six hundred and fifty-seven, was encouraged by the intrigues of France: and the power of France was looked upon as the sole power that could ratify and secure effectually the observation of the conditions then made. The league of the Rhine was not renewed I believe after the year one thousand six hundred and sixty-six; but tho this league was not renewed, yet some of these princes and states continued in their old engagements with



with France: whilst others took new engagements on particular occasions, according as private and sometimes very paultry interests, and the emissaries of France in all their little courts, disposed them. In short the princes of Germany shewed no alarm at the growing ambition and power of LEWIS the fourteenth, but contributed to encourage one, and to confirm the other. In such a state of things the German branch was little able to assist the Spanish branch against France, either in the war that ended by the Pyrenean treaty, or in that we are speaking of here, the short war that began in one thousand six hundred and sixty-seven, and was ended by the treaty of Aix la Chapelle, in one thousand six hundred and sixty-eight. But it was not this alone that disabled the Emperor from acting with vigour in the cause of his family then, nor that has rendered the house of Austria a dead weight upon all her allies ever since. Bigotry, and its inseparable



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companion, cruelty, as well as the tyranny and avarice of the court of Vienna, created in those days, and has maintained in ours, almost a perpetual diversion of the imperial arms from all effectual opposition to France. I mean to speak of the troubles in Hungary. Whatever they became in their progress, they were caused originally by the usurpations and persecutions of the emperor : and when the Hungarians were called rebels first, they were called so for no other reason than this, that they would not be slaves. The dominion of the emperor being less supportable than that of the Turks, this unhappy people opened a door to the latter to infest the empire, instead of making their country what it had been before, a barrier against the Ottoman power. France became a sure, tho secret ally of the Turks, as well as the Hungarians, and has found her account in it, by keeping the emperor in perpetual alarms on that side, while she has ravaged the empire



pire and the Low Countries on the other. Thus we saw, thirty-two years ago, the arms of France and Bavaria in possession of Passau, and the malcontents of Hungary in the suburbs of Vienna. In a word, when Lewis the fourteenth made the first essay of his power, by the war of one thousand six hundred and sixty-seven, and founded as it were the councils of Europe concerning his pretensions on the Spanish succession, he found his power to be great beyond what his neighbours or even he perhaps thought it: great by the wealth, and greater by the united spirit of his people; greater still by the ill policy, and divided interests that governed those who had a superior common interest to oppose him. He found that the members of the triple alliance did not see, or seeing did not think proper to own that they saw, the injustice, and the consequence of his pretensions. They contented themselves to give to Spain an act of guaranty for



securing the execution of the treaty of Aix la Chapelle. He knew even then how ill the guaranty would be observed by two of them at least, by England and by Sweden. The treaty itself was nothing more than a composition between the bully and the bullied. Tournay, and Lille, and Doway, and other places that I have forgot, were yielded to him: and he restored the county of Burgundy, according to the option that Spain made, against the interest and the expectation too of the Dutch, when an option was forced upon her. The king of Spain compounded for his possession: but the emperor compounded at the same time for his succession, by a private eventual treaty of partition, which the commander of Gremonville, and the count of Aversberg signed at Vienna. The same LEOPOLD, who exclaimed so loudly in one thousand six hundred and ninety eight against any partition of the Spanish monarchy, and refused to submit to that  
which



which England and Holland had then made, made one himself in one thousand six hundred and sixty eight, with so little regard to these two powers, that the whole ten provinces were thrown into the lot of France.

THERE is no room to wonder if such experience as LEWIS the fourteenth had upon this occasion, and such a face of affairs in Europe, raising his hopes, raised his ambition: and if, in making Peace at Aix la Chapelle, he meditated a new war, the war of one thousand six hundred and seventy two; the preparations he made for it by negotiations in all parts, by alliances wherever he found ingression, and by the increase of his forces, were equally proofs of ability, industry and power. I shall not descend into these particulars: your lordship will find them pretty well detailed in the memorials of that time. But one of the alliances he made I must mention, tho I mention



mention it with the utmost regret and indignation. England was fatally engaged to act a part in this conspiracy against the peace and the liberty of Europe: nay, against her own peace and her own liberty; for a bubble's part it was, equally wicked and impolitic. Forgive the terms I use, my lord: none can be too strong. The principles of the triple alliance, just and wise, and worthy of a king of England, were laid aside. Then, the progress of the French arms was to be checked, the ten provinces were to be saved, and by saving them the barrier of Holland was to be preserved. Now we joined our councils and our arms to those of France, in a project that could not be carried on at all, as it was easy to foresee and as the event shewed, unless it was carried on against Spain, the emperor, and most of the princes of Germany, as well as the Dutch; and which could not be carried on successfully, without leaving the ten provinces

vinces



vinces entirely at the mercy of France, and giving her pretence and opportunity of ravaging the empire, and extending her conquests on the Rhine. The medal of VAN BEUNINGHEN, and other pretences that France took for attacking the states of the low countries, were ridiculous. They imposed on no one: and the true object of LEWIS the fourteenth was manifest to all. But what could a king of England mean? CHARLES the second had reasons of resentment against the Dutch, and just ones too no doubt. Among the rest, it was not easy for him to forget the affront he had suffered and the loss he had sustained, when, depending on the peace that was ready to be signed, and that was signed at Breda in July, he neglected to fit out his fleet: and when that of Holland, commanded by RUYTER, with CORNELIUS DE WIT on board as deputy or commissioner of the states, burnt his ships at Chatham in June. The famous perpetual edict, as it was called  
but



but did not prove in the event, against the election of a state-holder, which JOHN DE WIT promoted, carried, and obliged the prince of Orange to swear to maintain a very few days after the conclusion of the peace at Breda, might be another motive in the breast of king CHARLES the second: as it was certainly a pretence of revenge on the Dutch, or at least on the DE WITS and the Louvestein faction that ruled almost despotically in that common-wealth. But it is plain that neither these reasons, nor others of a more antient date, determined him to this alliance with France; since he contracted the triple alliance within four or five months after the two events, I have mentioned, happened. What then did he mean? Did he mean to acquire one of the seven provinces, and divide them, as the Dutch had twice treated for the division of the ten, with France? I believe not; but this I believe, that his inclinations were favourable to the popish interest in general, and



and that he meant to make himself more absolute at home ; that he thought it necessary to this end to humble the Dutch, to reduce their power, and perhaps to change the form of their government ; to deprive his subjects of the correspondence with a neighbouring protestant and free state, and of all hope of succour and support from thence in their opposition to him ; in a word to abett the designs of France on the continent, that France might abett his designs on his own kingdom. This I say I believe, and this I should venture to affirm ; if I had in my hands to produce, and was at liberty to quote, the private relations I have red formerly, drawn up by those who were no enemies to such designs, and on the authority of those who were parties to them. But whatever king CHARLES the second meant, certain it is, that his conduct established the superiority of France in Europe.

BUT



BUT this charge however must not be confined to him alone. Those who were nearer the danger, those who were exposed to the immediate attacks of France, and even those who were her rivals for the same succession, having either assisted her, or engaged to remain neutrals. A strange fatality prevailed, and produced such a conjuncture as can hardly be paralleled in history. Your lordship will observe with astonishment, even in the beginning of the year one thousand six hundred and seventy two, all the neighbours of France acting as if they had nothing to fear from her, and some as if they had much to hope, by helping her to oppress the Dutch and sharing with her the spoils of that common-wealth. *Delenda est Carthago*, was the cry in England, and seemed too a maxim on the continent.

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IN the course of the same year, you will observe that all these powers took the alarm, and began to unite in opposition to France. Even England thought it time to interpose in favour of the Dutch. The consequences of this alarm, of this sudden turn in the policy of Europe, and of that which happened by the massacre of the DE WITS, and the elevation of the prince of Orange in the government of the seven provinces, saved these provinces, and stopped the rapid progress of the arms of France. LEWIS the fourteenth indeed surprised the seven provinces in this war, as he had surprised the ten in that of one thousand six hundred and sixty seven, and ravaged defenceless countries with armies sufficient to conquer them, if they had been prepared to resist. In the war of one thousand six hundred and seventy two, he had little less than one hundred and fifty thousand men on foot, besides the bodies of English, Swiss, Italians,



lians, and Swedes, that amounted to thirty or forty thousand more. With this mighty force he took forty places in forty days, imposed extravagant conditions of peace, played the monarch a little while at Utrecht; and as soon as the Dutch recovered from their consternation, and, animated by the example of the prince of Orange and the hopes of succour, refused these conditions, he went back to Versailles, and left his generals to carry on his enterprize: which they did with so little success, that Grave and Maestricht alone remained to him of all the boasted conquests he had made; and even these he offered two years afterwards to restore, if by that concession he could have prevailed on the Dutch at that time to make peace with him. But they were not yet disposed to abandon their allies; for allies now they had. The emperor and the king of Spain had engaged in the quarrel against France, and many of the princes of the empire had done the same.

Not



Not all. The Bavarian continued obstinate in his neutrality, and, to mention no more, the Swedes made a great diversion in favour of France in the empire; where the duke of Hanover abetted their designs as much as he could, for he was a zealous partisan of France, tho the other princes of his house acted for the common cause. I descend into no more particulars. The war that LEWIS the fourteenth kindled by attacking in so violent a manner the Dutch commonwealth, and by making so arbitrary an use of his first success, became general, in the Low Countries, in Spain, in Sicily, on the upper and lower Rhine, in Denmark, in Sweden, and in the provinces of Germany belonging to these two crowns, on the Mediterranean, the Ocean, and the Baltic. France supported this war with advantage on every side: and when your lordship considers in what manner it was carried on against her, you will not be surpris'd that she did so. Spain had spirit,

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but too little strength to maintain her power in Sicily, where Messina had revolted; to defend her frontier on that side of the Pyrenees, and to resist the great efforts of the French in the Low Countries. The empire was divided; and, even among the princes who acted against France, there was neither union in their councils, nor concert in their projects, nor order in preparations, nor vigour in execution: and, to say the truth, there was not, in the whole confederacy, a man whose abilities could make him a match for the prince of Condé or the marshal of Turenne; nor many who were in any degree equal to LUXEMBURG, CREQUI, SCHOMBERG, and other generals of inferior note, who commanded the armies of France. The emperor took this very time to make new invasions on the liberties of Hungary, and to oppress his protestant subjects. The prince of Orange alone acted with invincible firmness, like a patriot, and a hero. Neither  
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the seductions of France nor those of England, neither the temptations of ambition nor those of private interest, could make him swerve from the true interest of his country, nor from the common interest of Europe. He had raised more sieges, and lost more battles, it was said, than any general of his age had done. Be it so. But his defeats were manifestly due in great measure to circumstances independent on him: and that spirit, which even these defeats could not depress, was all his own. He had difficulties in his own commonwealth; the governors of the Spanish Low Countries crossed his measures sometimes; the German allies disappointed and broke them often: and it is not improbable that he was frequently betrayed. He was so perhaps even by SOUCHES, the imperial general; a Frenchman according to BAYLE, and a pensioner of Louvois according to common report, and very strong appearances. He had not yet credit and authority sufficient to

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make



make him a centre of union to a whole confederacy, the soul that animated and directed so great a body. He came to be such afterwards; but at the time spoken of he could not take so great a part upon him. No other prince or general was equal to it: and the consequences of this defect appeared almost in every operation. France was surrounded by a multitude of enemies, all intent to demolish her power. But, like the builders of Babel, they spoke different languages: and as those could not build, these could not demolish, for want of understanding one another. France improved this advantage by her arms, and more by her negotiations. Nimeghen was, after Cologne, the scene of these. England was the mediating power, and I know not whether our CHARLES the second did not serve her purposes more usefully in the latter, and under the character of mediator, than he did or could have done by joining his arms to her's, and acting as her ally.

The



The Dutch were induced to sign a treaty with him, that broke the confederacy, and gave great advantage to France: for the purport of it was to oblige France and Spain to make peace on a plan to be proposed to them, and no mention was made in it of the other allies that I remember. The Dutch were glad to get out of an expensive war. France promised to restore Maestricht to them, and Maestricht was the only place that remained unrecovered of all they had lost. They dropped Spain at Nimeghen as they had dropped France at Munster; but many circumstances concurred to give a much worse grace to their abandoning of Spain, than to their abandoning of France. I need not specify them: this only I would observe. When they made a separate peace at Munster, they left an ally who was in condition to carry on the war alone with advantage, and they presumed to impose no terms upon him: when they made a separate peace at Nime-

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ghen, they abandoned an ally who was in no condition to carry on the war alone, and who was reduced to accept whatever terms the common enemy prescribed. In their great distress in one thousand six hundred and seventy three, they engaged to restore Maestricht to the Spaniards as soon as it should be retaken: it was not retaken, and they accepted it for themselves as the price of the separate peace they made with France. The Dutch had engaged farther, to make neither peace nor truce with the king of France, till that prince consented to restore to Spain all he had conquered since the Pyrenean treaty. But far from keeping this promise in any tolerable degree, LEWIS the fourteenth acquired by the plan imposed on Spain at Nimeghen, besides the county of Burgundy, so many other countries and towns on the side of the ten Spanish provinces, that these, added to the places he kept of those which had been yielded to him by the treaty

treaty



treaty of Aix la Chapelle (for some of little consequence he restored) put into his hands the principal strength of that barrier, against which we goaded ourselves almost to death in the last great war; and made good the saying of the marshal of SCHOMBERG, that to attack this barrier was to take the beast by his horns. I know very well what may be said to excuse the Dutch. The emperor was more intent to tyrannize his subjects on one side than to defend them on the other. He attempted little against France, and the little he did attempt was ill ordered, and worse executed. The assistance of the princes of Germany was often uncertain, and always expensive. Spain was already indebted to Holland for great sums; greater still must be advanced to her if the war continued: and experience shewed that France was able, and would continue, to prevail against her present enemies. The triple league had stopped her progress and obliged her to

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abandon



abandon the county of Burgundy; but Sweden was now engaged in the war on the side of France, as England had been in the beginning of it: and England was now privately favourable to her interests, as Sweden had been in the beginning of it. The whole ten provinces would have been subdued in the course of a few campaigns more: and it was better for Spain and the Dutch too, that part should be saved by accepting a sort of composition, than the whole be risked by refusing it. This might be alledged to excuse the conduct of the States General, in imposing hard terms on Spain; in making none for their other allies, and in signing alone: by which steps they gave France an opportunity that she improved with great dexterity of management, the opportunity of treating with the confederates one by one, and of beating them by detail in the cabinet, if I may so say, as she had often done in the field. I shall not compare these reasons, which were  
but



but too well founded in fact, and must appear plausible at least, with other considerations that might be, and were at the time, insisted upon. I confine myself to a few observations, which every knowing and impartial man must admit. Your lordship will observe first that the fatal principle of compounding with LEWIS the fourteenth, from the time that his pretensions, his power, and the use he made of it, began to threaten Europe, prevailed still more at Nimeghen than it had prevailed at Aix : so that altho he did not obtain to the full all he attempted, yet the dominions of France were by common consent, on every treaty, more and more extended ; her barriers on all sides were more and more strengthened ; those of her neighbours were more and more weakened ; and that power, which was to assert one day, against the rest of Europe the pretended rights of the house of Bourbon to the Spanish monarchy, was more and more established, and rendered



truly formidable in such hands at least, during the course of the first eighteen years of the period. Your lordship will please to observe, in the second place, that the extreme weakness of one branch of Austria, and the miserable conduct of both; the poverty of some of the princes of the empire, and the disunion, and, to speak plainly, the mercenary policy of all of them; in short, the confined views, the false notions, and, to speak as plainly of my own as of other nations, the iniquity of the councils of England, not only hindred the growth of this power from being stopped in time, but nursed it up into strength almost insuperable by any future confederacy. A third observation is this. If the excuses made for the conduct of the Dutch at Nimeghen are not sufficient, they too must come in for their share in this condemnation even after the death of the DE WITS; as they were to be condemned most justly, during that administration, for abetting and  
favouring



favouring France. If these excuses, grounded on their inability to pursue any longer a war, the principal profit of which was to accrue to their confederates, for that was the case after the year one thousand six hundred and seventy-three, or one thousand six hundred and seventy-four, and the principal burden of which was thrown on them by their confederates; if these are sufficient, they should not have acted, for decency's sake as well as out of good policy, the part they did act in one thousand seven hundred and eleven and one thousand seven hundred and twelve, towards the late queen, who had complaints of the same kind, in a much higher degree and with circumstances much more aggravating, to make of them, of the emperor, and of all the princes of Germany; and who was far from treating them and their other allies at that time, as they treated Spain and their other allies in one thousand six hundred and seventy-eight. Immediately after the  
Dutch



Dutch had made their peace, that of Spain was signed with France. The emperor's treaty with this crown and that of Sweden was concluded in the following year: and LEWIS the fourteenth being now at liberty to assist his ally, whilst he had tied up the powers with whom he had treated from assisting theirs, he soon forced the king of Denmark and the elector of Brandenburg to restore all they had taken from the Swedes, and to conclude the peace of the north. In all these treaties he gave the law, and he was now at the highest point of his grandeur. He continued at this point for several years, and in this height of his power he prepared those alliances against it, under the weight of which he was at last well-nigh oppressed; and might have been reduced as low as the general interest of Europe required, if some of the causes which worked now had not continued to work in his favour, and if his enemies had not proved, in their turn of fortune,



fortune, as insatiable as prosperity had rendered him.

AFTER he had made peace with all the powers with whom he had been in war, he continued to vex both Spain and the empire, and to extend his conquests in the Low Countries, and on the Rhine, both by the pen and the sword. He erected the chambers of Metz and of Bri-  
fach, where his own subjects were prosecutors, witnesses, and judges all at once. Upon the decisions of these tribunals, he seized into his own hands, under the notion of dependencies and the pretence of reunions, whatever towns or districts of country tempted his ambition, or suited his conveniency: and added by these and by other means, in the midst of peace, more territories to those the late treaties had yielded to him, than he could have got by continuing the War. He acted afterwards in the support of all this, without any bounds or limits. His  
glory



glory was a reason for attacking Holland in one thousand six hundred and seventy-two, and his conveniency a reason for many of the attacks he made on others afterwards. He took Luxemburg by force, he stole Strasburg, he bought Casal, and whilst he waited the opportunity of acquiring to his family the crown of Spain, he was not without thoughts nor hopes perhaps of bringing into it the imperial crown likewise. Some of the cruelties he exercised in the empire may be ascribed to his disappointment in this view: I say some of them, because in the war that ended by the treaty of Nimeghen, he had already exercised many. Tho the French writers endeavour to slide over them, to palliate them, and to impute them particularly to the English that were in their service; for even this one of their writers has the front to advance: yet these cruelties, unheard of among civilized nations, must be granted to have been ordered by the councils, and executed



cuted by the arms of France, in the Palatinate, and in other parts.

IF LEWIS the fourteenth could have contented himself with the acquisitions that were confirmed to him by the treaties of one thousand six hundred and seventy-eight, and one thousand six hundred and seventy-nine, and with the authority and reputation which he then gained; it is plain that he would have prevented the alliances that were afterwards formed against him; and that he might have regained his credit amongst the princes of the empire, where he had one family-alliance by the marriage of his brother to the daughter of the elector Palatine, and another by that of his son to the sister of the elector of Bavaria, where Sweden was closely attached to him, and where the same principles of private interest would have soon attached others as closely. He might have remained not only the principal, but the directing pow-

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er of Europe, and have held this rank with all the glory imaginable, till the death of the king of Spain, or some other object of great ambition, had determined him to act another part. But instead of this, he continued to vex and provoke all those who were, unhappily for them, his neighbours, and that in many instances for trifles. An example of this kind occurs to me. On the death of the duke of Deux Ponts, he seized that little inconsiderable dutchy, without any regard to the indisputable right of the kings of Sweden, to the services that crown had rendered him, or to the want he might have of that alliance hereafter. The consequence was, that Sweden entered with the emperor, the king of Spain, the elector of Bavaria, and the States General, into the alliance of guaranty, as it was called, about the year one thousand six hundred and eighty three, and into the famous league of Ausburg,



Ausburg, in one thousand six hundred and eighty-six.

SINCE I have mentioned this league, and since we may date from it a more general, and more concerted opposition to France than there had been before; give me leave to recal some of the reflections that have presented themselves to my mind, in considering what I have read, and what I have heard related, concerning the passages of that time. They will be of use to form our judgment concerning later passages. If the king of France became an object of aversion on account of any invasions he made, any deviations from public faith, any barbarities exercised where his arms prevailed, or the persecution of his protestant subjects; the emperor deserved to be such an object, at least as much as he, on the same accounts. The emperor was so too, but with this difference relatively to the political system of the west. The



Austrian ambition and bigotry exerted themselves in distant countries, whose interests were not considered as a part of this system; for otherwise there would have been as much reason for assisting the people of Hungary and of Transylvania against the emperor, as there had been formerly for assisting the people of the seven united provinces against Spain, or as there had been lately for assisting them against France: but the ambition and bigotry of LEWIS the fourteenth were exerted in the Low Countries, on the Rhine, in Italy, and in Spain, in the very midst of this system, if I may say so, and with success that could not fail to subvert it in time. The power of the house of Austria, that had been feared too long, was feared no longer: and that of the house of Bourbon, by having been feared too late, was now grown terrible. The emperor was so intent on the establishment of his absolute power in Hungary, that he exposed the empire doubly  
to



to desolation and ruin for the sake of it. He left the frontier almost quite defenceless on the side of the Rhine, against the inroads and ravages of France, and by shewing no mercy to the Hungarians nor keeping any faith with them, he forced that miserable people into alliances with the Turk, who invaded the empire and besieged Vienna. Even this event had no effect upon him. Your lordship will find, that SOBIESKI king of Poland, who had forced the Turks to raise the siege, and had fixed the imperial crown that tottered on his head, could not prevail on him to take those measures by which alone it was possible to cover the empire, to secure the king of Spain, and to reduce that power who was probably one day to dispute with him, this prince's succession. Tekeli and the malcontents made such demands as none but a tyrant could refuse, the preservation of their antient privileges, liberty of conscience, the convocation of a free diet or

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parliament, and others of less importance. All was in vain. The war continued with them, and with the Turks, and France was left at liberty to push her enterprizes almost without opposition, against Germany and the Low Countries. The distress in both was so great, that the states general saw no other expedient for stopping the progress of the French arms, than a cessation of hostilities, or a truce of twenty years; which they negotiated, and which was accepted by the emperor and the king of Spain, on the terms that LEWIS the fourteenth thought fit to offer. By these terms he was to remain in full and quiet possession of all he had acquired since the years one thousand six hundred and seventy-eight, and one thousand six hundred and seventy-nine; among which acquisitions that of Luxemburg and that of Strasburg were comprehended. The conditions of this truce were so advantageous to France, that all her intrigues were



were employed to obtain a definitive treaty of peace upon the same conditions. But this was neither the interest nor the intention of the other contracting powers. The imperial arms had been very successful against the Turks. This success, as well as the troubles that followed upon it in the Ottoman armies, and at the Porte, gave reasonable expectation of concluding a peace on that side: and, this peace concluded, the emperor and the empire and the king of Spain would have been in a much better posture to treat with France. With these views that were wise and just, the league of Ausburg was made between the emperor, the kings of Spain and Sweden as princes of the empire, and the other circles and princes. This league was purely defensive. An express article declared it to be so: and as it had no other regard, it was not only conformable to the laws and constitutions of the empire, and to the practice of all nations,



but even to the terms of the act of truce so lately concluded. This pretence therefore for breaking the truce, seizing the electorate of Cologne, invading the Palatinate, besieging Philipsburg, and carrying unexpected and undeclared war into the empire, could not be supported: nor is it possible to read the reasons published by France at this time, and drawn from her fears of the imperial power, without laughter. As little pretence was there to complain, that the emperor refused to convert at once the truce into a definitive treaty; since if he had done so, he would have confirmed in a lump, and without any discussion, all the arbitrary decrees of those chambers, or courts, that France had erected to cover her usurpations; and would have given up almost a sixth part of the provinces of the empire, that France one way or other had possessed herself of. The pretensions of the dutchess of Orleans on the succession of her father, and her brother, which  
were



were disputed by the then elector Palatine and were to be determined by the laws and customs of the empire, afforded as little pretence for beginning this war, as any of the former allegations. The exclusion of the cardinal of Furstenberg, who had been elected to the archbishopric of Cologne, was capable of being aggravated: but even in this case his most christian majesty opposed his judgment and his authority against the judgment and authority of that holy father, whose eldest son he was proud to be called. In short, the true reason why LEWIS the fourteenth began that cruel war with the empire, two years after he had concluded a cessation of hostilities for twenty, was this: he resolved to keep what he had got; and therefore he resolved to encourage the Turks to continue the war. He did this effectually, by invading Germany at the very instant when the Sultan was suing for peace. Notwithstanding this, the Turks were in



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treaty again the following year : and good policy should have obliged the emperor, since he could not hope to carry on this war and that against France at the same time, with vigour and effect, to conclude a peace with the least dangerous enemy of the two. The decision of his disputes with France could not be deferred, his designs against the Hungarians were in part accomplished, for his son was declared king, and the settlement of that crown in his family was made, and the rest of these as well as those that he formed against the Turks might be deferred. But the councils of Vienna judged differently, and insisted even at this critical moment on the most exorbitant terms ; on some of such a nature, that the Turks shewed more humanity and a better sense of religion in refusing, than they in asking them. Thus the war went on in Hungary, and proved a constant diversion in favour of France, during the whole course of that which LEWIS  
the



the fourteenth began at this time; for the treaty of Carlowitz was posterior to that of Ryfwic. The Empire, Spain, England, and Holland engaged in the war with France: and on them the emperor left the burden of it. In the short war of one thousand six hundred and sixty-seven, he was not so much as a party, and instead of assisting the king of Spain, which it must be owned he was in no good condition of doing, he bargained for dividing that prince's succession, as I have observed above. In the war of one thousand six hundred and seventy-two he made some feeble efforts. In this of one thousand six hundred and eighty-eight he did still less: and in the war which broke out at the beginning of the present century he did nothing, at least after the first campaign in Italy, and after the engagements that England and Holland took by the grand alliance. In a word, from the time that an opposition to France became a common cause



in Europe, the house of Austria has been a clog upon it in many instances, and of considerable assistance to it in none. The accession of England to this cause, which was brought about by the revolution of one thousand six hundred and eighty-eight, might have made amends, and more than amends one would think, for this defect, and have thrown superiority of power and of success on the side of the confederates, with whom she took part against France. This I say might be imagined, without over-rating the power of England, or undervaluing that of France; and it was imagined at that time. How it proved otherwise in the event; how France came triumphant out of the war that ended by the treaty of Ryswic, and tho she gave up a great deal, yet preserved the greatest and the best part of her conquests and acquisitions made since the treaties of Westphalia, and the Pyrenees; how she acquired by the gift of Spain that whole monarchy for one

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of



of her princes, tho she had no reason to expect the least part of it without a war at one time, nor the great lot of it even by a war at any time ; in short, how she wound up advantageously the ambitious system she had been fifty years in weaving ; how she concluded a war in which she was defeated on every side, and wholly exhausted, with little diminution of the provinces and barriers acquired to France, and with the quiet possession of Spain and the Indies to a prince of the house of Bourbon : all this, my lord, will be the subject of your researches, when you come down to the latter part of the last period of modern history.

END of the FIRST VOLUME.



and State of Europe. 1715  
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