

B O O K S E V E N

ENGLAND'S ADVANCE
TO WORLD POWER

William of Orange

FROM his earliest years the extraordinary Prince who in the general interest robbed his father-in-law of the British throne had dwelt under harsh and stern conditions. William of Orange was fatherless and childless. His life was loveless. His marriage was dictated by reasons of State. He was brought up by a termagant grandmother, and in his youth was regulated by one Dutch committee after another. His childhood was unhappy and his health bad. He had a tubercular lung. He was asthmatic and partly crippled. But within this emaciated and defective frame there burned a remorseless fire, fanned by the storms of Europe, and intensified by the grim compression of his surroundings. His greatest actions began before he was twenty-one. From that age he had fought constantly in the field, and toiled through every intrigue of Dutch domestic politics and of the European scene. For four years he had been the head of the English conspiracy against the Catholic King James II.

Women meant little to him. For a long time he treated his loving, faithful wife with indifference. Later on, towards the end of his reign, when he saw how much Queen Mary had helped him in the English sphere of his policy, he was sincerely grateful to her, as to a faithful friend or Cabinet officer who had maintained the Government. His grief at her death was unaffected.

In religion he was of course a Calvinist; but he does not seem to have derived much spiritual solace from the forbidding doctrines of the sect. As a sovereign and commander he was entirely without religious prejudices. No agnostic could have displayed more philosophic impartiality. Protestant, Catholic, Jew, or infidel were all the same to him. He dreaded and hated Gallican Catholicism less because it was to him idolatrous than because it was French. He employed Catholic officers without hesitation when they would serve his purpose. He used religious questions as counters in his political combinations. While he beat the Protestant drum in England and Ireland, he had potent influence with the Pope, with whom his relations were at all times a model of com-

prehending statesmanship. It almost seemed that a being had been created for the sole purpose of resisting the domination of France and her "Great King."

It was the natural consequence of such an upbringing and of such a mission that William should be ruthless. Although he had not taken part in the conspiracy to murder the Dutch statesmen, the De Witts, in 1672, he had rejoiced at it, profited by it, and protected and pensioned the murderers. He had offered to help James II against the Protestant Duke of Monmouth, but took no trouble to hamper Monmouth's sailing from his refuge in Holland. The darkest stain upon his memory was to come from Scotland. A Highland clan whose chief had been tardy in making his submission was doomed to destruction by William's signed authority. Troops were sent to Glencoe "to extirpate that den of thieves." But the horror with which this episode has always been regarded arises from the treacherous breach of the laws of hospitality by which it was accomplished. The royal soldiers lived for weeks in the valley with the clansmen, partaking of their rude hospitality under the guise of friendship. Suddenly, on a freezing winter night, they turned upon their hosts and murdered them by the score while they slept or fled from their huts. The King had not prescribed the method, but he bears the indelible shame of the deed.

William was cold, but not personally cruel. He wasted no time on minor revenges. His sole quarrel was with Louis XIV. For all his experience from a youth spent at the head of armies, and for all his dauntless heart, he was never a great commander. He had not a trace of that second-sight of the battlefield which is the mark of military genius. He was no more than a resolute man of good common sense whom the accident of birth had carried to the conduct of war. His inspiration lay in the sphere of diplomacy. He has rarely been surpassed in the sagacity, patience, and discretion of his statecraft. The combinations he made, the difficulties he surmounted, the adroitness with which he used the time factor or played upon the weakness of others, his unerring sense of proportion and power of assigning to objectives their true priorities, all mark him for the highest repute.

His paramount interest was in the great war now begun throughout Europe, and in the immense confederacy he had brought into being. He had regarded the English adventure as a divagation, a duty necessary but tiresome, which had to

be accomplished for a larger purpose. He never was fond of England, nor interested in her domestic affairs. Her seamy side was what he knew. He required the wealth and power of England by land and sea for the European war. He had come in person to enlist her. He used the English public men who had been his confederates for his own ends, and rewarded them for their services, but as a race he regarded them as inferior in fibre and fidelity to his Dutchmen.

Once securely seated on the English throne he scarcely troubled to disguise these sentiments. It was not surprising that such manners, and still more the mood from which they evidently arose, gave deep offence. For the English, although submissive to the new authority of which they had felt the need, were as proud as any race in Europe. No one relishes being an object of aversion and contempt, especially when these affronts are unstudied, spontaneous, and sincere. The great nobles and Parliamentarians who had made the Revolution and were still rigidly set upon its purpose could not but muse upon the easy gaiety and grace of the Court of Charles II. William's unsociable disposition, his greediness at table, his silence and surliness in company, his indifference to women, his dislike of London, all prejudiced him with polite society. The ladies voted him "a low Dutch bear." The English Army too was troubled in its soul. Neither officers nor men could dwell without a sense of humiliation upon the military aspects of the Revolution. They did not like to see all the most important commands entrusted to Dutchmen. They eyed sourly the Dutch infantry who paced incessantly the sentry-beats of Whitehall and St. James's, and contrasted their shabby blue uniforms with the scarlet pomp of the 1st Guards and Coldstreamers, now banished from London. As long as the Irish war continued, or whenever a French invasion threatened, these sentiments were repressed; but at all other times they broke forth with pent-up anger. The use of British troops on the Continent became unpopular, and the pressure upon William to dismiss his Dutch Guards and Dutch favourites was unceasing.

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As soon as he learned on the afternoon of December 23, 1688, that by King James's flight he had become undisputed master of England the Prince of Orange took the step for which he had come across the water. The French Ambassador

was given twenty-four hours to quit the Island and England was committed to the general coalition against France. This opened a war which, with an uneasy interlude, gripped Europe for twenty-five years, and was destined to bring low to the ground the power of Louis XIV.

The whole British nation had been united in the expulsion of James. But there was now no lawful Government of any kind. A Convention Parliament was summoned by the Prince on the advice of the statesmen who had made the Revolution. As soon as it was elected it became involved in points of constitutional propriety; and the national non-party coalition which was responsible for summoning William to England broke under the stress of creating a settled Government for the country. Personal ambitions and party creeds shot through the complicated manœuvres which led to the final constitutional arrangements. King Charles's former Minister, the Earl of Danby, had much to hope for from these weeks of chaos. It was he who had created the Tory Party from the Anglican gentry and the Established Church after the breakdown of the Cabal. The intrigues of Charles with France and the Popish Plot had wrecked his political career. To save him from the malice of his enemies the King had incarcerated him in comfort in the Tower. He had been released towards the end of the reign, and now in the 1688 Revolution he saw his chance to remake his fortunes. His position as a great landowner in the North had enabled him to raise the gentry and provide a considerable military force at a critical and decisive moment. With the prestige of this achievement behind him he had arrived in London. Loyal Tories were alarmed by the prospect of disturbing the Divine Right in the Stuart succession. Danby got in touch with Princess Mary. An obvious solution which would please many Tories was the accession of Mary in her own right. In this way the essential basis of the Tory creed could be preserved, and for this Danby now fought in the debates of the hastily assembled Lords. But other Tories, including Mary's uncle, the Earl of Clarendon, favoured the appointment of William as Regent, James remaining titular King. This cleavage of ideas helped the Whigs to prevail.

The Whigs, for their part, looked on the Revolution as the vindication of their own political belief in the idea of a contract between Crown and people. It now lay with Parliament to settle the succession. The whole situation turned upon the decision of William. Would he be content with the mere title

of honorary consort to his wife? If so the conscience of the Tories would not be violated and the Whig share in the Revolution would be obscured. The Whigs themselves had lost their leaders in the Rye House Plot, and it was a single politician who played their game for them and won, while they reaped the benefit.

George Savile, Marquis of Halifax, "the Trimmer" as he was proud to be called, was the subtlest and most solitary statesman of his day. His strength in this crisis lay in his knowledge of William's intention. He had been sent by James to treat with the invading prince in the days before the King's flight. He knew that William had come to stay, that the Dutchman needed a secure and sovereign position in England in order to meet the overshadowing menace of French aggression in Europe. The suggestion that William should be Regent on behalf of James was rejected in the Lords, but only by 51 votes to 49. After protracted debates in the Convention Halifax's view was accepted that the Crown should be jointly vested in the persons of William and Mary. His triumph was complete, and it was he who presented the Crown and the Declaration of Rights to the two sovereigns on behalf of both Houses. But his conception of politics was hostile to the growing development of party. In a time of high crisis he could play a decisive rôle. He possessed no phalanx of partisans behind him. His moment of power was brief; but the Whig Party owed to him their revival in the years which followed.

Step by step the tangle had been cleared. By the private advice of John and Sarah Churchill, Princess Anne, Mary's younger sister, surrendered in favour of William her right to succeed to the throne should Mary predecease him. Thus William gained without dispute the crown for life. He accepted this Parliamentary decision with good grace. Many honours and promotions at the time of the coronation rewarded the Revolutionary leaders. Churchill, though never in William's immediate circle, was confirmed in his rank of Lieutenant-General, and employed virtually as Commander-in-Chief to reconstitute the English Army. He was created Earl of Marlborough, and when in May 1689 war was formally declared against France, and William was detained in England and later embroiled in Ireland, Marlborough led the English contingent of eight thousand men against the French in Flanders.

The British Islands now entered upon a most dangerous

war crisis. The exiled James was received by Louis with every mark of consideration and sympathy which the pride and policy of the Great King could devise. Ireland presented itself as the obvious immediate centre of action. James, sustained by a disciplined French contingent, many French officers, and large supplies of French munitions and money, had landed in Ireland in March. He was welcomed as a deliverer. He reigned in Dublin, aided by an Irish Parliament, and was soon defended by a Catholic army which may have reached a hundred thousand men. The whole island except the Protestant settlements in the North passed under the control of the Jacobites, as they were henceforth called. While William looked eastward to Flanders and the Rhine the eyes of his Parliament were fixed upon the opposite quarter. When he reminded Parliament of Europe they vehemently drew his attention to Ireland. The King made the time-honoured mistake of meeting both needs inadequately. The defence of Londonderry and its relief from the sea was the one glorious episode of the campaigning season of 1689.

Cracks speedily appeared in the fabric of the original National Government. The Whigs considered that the Revolution belonged to them. Their judgment, their conduct, their principles, had been vindicated. Ought they not then to have all the offices? But William knew that he could never have gained the crown of England without the help of the Cavaliers and High Churchmen, who formed the staple of the Tory Party. Moreover, at this time, as a king he liked the Tory mood. Here was a Church devoted to hereditary monarchy. William felt that Whig principles would ultimately lead to a republic. Under the name of Stadtholder he was almost King of Holland; he had no desire under the name of King to be only Stadtholder of England. He was therefore ready to dissolve the Convention Parliament which had given him the crown while, as the Whigs said, "its work was all unfinished." At the election of February 1690 the Tories won.

It may seem strange that the new King should have turned to the inscrutable personality of the Earl of Sunderland, who had been King James's chief adviser. But James and Sunderland had now irrevocably quarrelled, and the Jacobites held the Earl mainly responsible for the Revolution. Sunderland was henceforth bound to William's interest, and his knowledge of the European political scene was invaluable to his sovereign's designs. After a brief interval he reappeared in

England, and gained a surprising influence. He did not dare seek office for himself, but he made and marred the greatest fortunes. The actual government was entrusted to the statesmen of the middle view—the Duke of Shrewsbury, Sidney Godolphin, and Marlborough, and, though now, as always, he stood slightly aloof from all parties, Halifax. All had served King James. Their notion of party was to use both or either of the factions to keep themselves above water and to further the royal service. Each drew in others. “Shrewsbury was usually hand-in-glove with Wharton; Godolphin and Marlborough shared confidences with Admiral Russell.”¹ Of these men it was Godolphin during the next twenty years who stood closest to Marlborough. Great political dexterity was combined in him with a scrupulous detachment. He never thrust forward for power, but he was seldom out of office. He served under four sovereigns, and with various colleagues, but no one questioned his loyalty. He knew how to use a well-timed resignation, or the threat of it, to prove his integrity. Awkward, retiring, dreamy by nature, he was yet heart and soul absorbed by the business of government.

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Had William used his whole strength in Ireland in 1689 he would have been free to carry it to the Continent in 1690; but in the new year he found himself compelled to go in person with his main force to Ireland, and by the summer took the field at the head of thirty-six thousand men. Thus the whole power of England was diverted from the main theatre of the war. The Prince of Waldeck, William's Commander in the Low Countries, suffered a crushing defeat at the skilful hands of Marshal Luxembourg in the Battle of Fleurus. At the same time the French Fleet gained a victory over the combined fleets of England and Holland off Beachy Head. It was said in London that “the Dutch had the honour, the French had the advantage, and the English the shame.” The command of the Channel temporarily passed to the French under Admiral Tourville, and it seemed that they could at the same time land an invading army in England and stop William returning from Ireland.

Queen Mary's Council, of which Marlborough was a member, had to face an alarming prospect. They were sustained by the loyalty and spirit of the nation. The whole country

¹ K. G. Felling, *A History of the Tory Party, 1640–1714* (1924).

took up what arms they could find. With a nucleus of about six thousand regular troops and the hastily improvised militia and yeomanry, Marlborough stood ready to meet the invasion. However, on July 11 King William gained a decisive victory at the Boyne and drove King James out of Ireland back to France. The appeals of the defeated monarch for a French army to conquer England were not heeded by Louis. The French King had his eyes on Germany. The anxious weeks of July and August passed by without more serious injury than the burning of Teignmouth by French raiders. By the winter the French Fleet was dismantled, and the English and Dutch Fleets were refitted and again at sea. Thus the danger passed. Late as was the season, Marlborough was commissioned by Queen Mary's Council and King William to lead an expedition into Ireland, and in a short and brilliant campaign he captured both Cork and Kinsale and subdued the whole of the Southern Irish counties. The end of 1690 therefore saw the Irish War ended and the command of the sea regained. William was thus free after two years to proceed in person to the Continent with strong forces and to assume command of the main armies of the Alliance. He took Marlborough with him at the head of the English troops. But no independent scope was given to Marlborough's genius, already discerned among the captains of the Allies, and the campaign, although on the greatest scale, was indecisive.

Thereafter a divergence grew between the King and Marlborough. When the commands for the next year's campaign were being assigned William proposed to take Marlborough to Flanders as Lieutenant-General attached to his own person. Marlborough demurred at this undefined position. He did not wish to be carried round Flanders as a mere adviser, offering counsel that was not taken, and bearing responsibility for the failures that ensued. He asked to remain at home unless required to command the British troops, as in the past year. But the King had offered them to one of his Dutch generals, Baron Ginkel, fresh from Irish victories at Aughrim and Limerick. In the Commons a movement was on foot for an address on the employment of foreigners. Marlborough was known to be sympathetic, and he proposed himself to move a similar motion in the House of Lords. Widespread support was forthcoming, and it even appeared at one time likely that the motion would be carried by majorities in both Houses. Moreover, Marlborough's activities did not end with Parlia-

ment. He was the leading British general, and many officers of various ranks resorted to him and loudly expressed their resentment at the favour shown to the Dutch.

At this time almost all the leading men in England resumed relations with James, now installed at Saint-Germain, near Paris. Godolphin also cherished sentiments of respectful affection towards the exiled Queen. Shrewsbury, Halifax, and Marlborough all entered into correspondence with James. King William was aware of this. He still continued to employ these men in great offices of State and confidence about his person. He accepted their double-dealing as a necessary element in a situation of unexampled perplexity. He tolerated the fact that his principal English counsellors were reinsuring themselves against a break-up of his Government or his death on the battlefield. He knew, or at least suspected, that Shrewsbury was in touch with Saint-Germain through his mother; yet he insisted on his keeping the highest offices. He knew that Admiral Russell had made his peace with James; yet he kept him in command of the Fleet. If he quarrelled with Marlborough it was certainly not because of the family contacts which the General preserved with his nephew, King James's son the Duke of Berwick, or his wife Sarah with her sister, the Jacobite Duchess of Tyrconnel. The King probably knew that Marlborough had obtained his pardon from James by persuading the Princess Anne to send a dutiful message to her father. There was talk of the substitution of Anne for William and Mary, and at the same time the influence of the Churchills with Princess Anne continued to be dominating. Any rift between Anne and her sister, Queen Mary, must sharpen the already serious differences between the King and Marlborough. The ill-feeling between the royal personages developed rapidly. William treated Anne's husband, Prince George of Denmark, with the greatest contempt. He excluded him from all share in the wars. He would not take him to Flanders, nor allow him to go to sea with the Fleet. Anne, who dearly loved her husband, was infuriated by these affronts.

As often happens in disputes among high personages, the brunt fell on a subordinate. The Queen demanded the dismissal of Sarah Churchill from Anne's household. Anne refused with all the obstinate strength of her nature. The talk became an altercation. The courtiers drew back distressed. The two sisters parted in the anger of a mortal estrangement.

The next morning at nine o'clock Marlborough, discharging his functions as Gentleman of the Bedchamber, handed the King his shirt, and William preserved his usual impassivity. Two hours later the Earl of Nottingham, Secretary of State, delivered to Marlborough a written order to sell at once all the offices he held, civil and military, and consider himself as from that date dismissed from the Army and all public employment and forbidden the Court. No reasons were given officially for this important stroke. Marlborough took his dismissal with unconcern. His chief associates, the leading counsellors of the King, were offended. Shrewsbury let his disapproval be known; Godolphin threatened to retire from the Government. Admiral Russell, now Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, went so far as to reproach King William to his face with having shown ingratitude to the man who had "set the crown upon his head." The Queen now forbade Sarah to come to Court, and Anne retorted by quitting it herself. She left her apartments in the Cockpit at Whitehall and retired to Syon House, offered her by the Duke of Somerset. No pressure would induce Anne to part with her cherished friend, and in these fires of adversity and almost persecution links were forged upon which the destinies of England were presently to hang.

Continental War

NO sooner had King William set out upon the Continental war than the imminent menace of invasion fell upon the Island he had left denuded of troops. Louis XIV now planned a descent upon England. King James was to be given his chance of regaining the throne. The exiled Jacobite Court at Saint-Germain had for two years oppressed the French War Office with their assertion that England was ripe and ready for a restoration. An army of ten thousand desperate Irishmen and ten thousand French regulars was assembled around Cherbourg. The whole French Fleet, with a multitude of transports and store-ships, was concentrated in the Norman and Breton ports.

It was not until the middle of April 1692 that the French designs became known to the English Government. Fevered but vigorous preparations were made for defence by land and sea. As upon the approach of the Spanish Armada, all England was alert. But everything turned upon the Admiral. Russell, like Marlborough, had talked with the Jacobite agents: William and Mary feared, and James fervently believed, that he would play the traitor to his country and his profession. Jacobite sources admit however that Russell plainly told their agent that, much as he loved James and loathed William's Government, if he met the French Fleet at sea he would do his best to destroy it, "even though King James himself were on board." He kept his word. "If your officers play you false," he said to the sailors on the day of battle, "overboard with them, and myself the first."

On May 19-20 the English and Dutch Fleets met Tourville with the main French naval power in the English Channel off Cape La Hogue. Russell's armada, which carried forty thousand men and seven thousand guns, was the stronger by ninety-nine ships to forty-four. Both sides fought hard, and Tourville was decisively beaten. Russell and his admirals, all of whom were counted on the Jacobite lists as pledged and faithful adherents of King James, followed the beaten Navy into its harbours. During five successive days the fugitive

warships were cut out under the shore batteries by flotillas of English row-boats. The whole apparatus of invasion was destroyed under the very eyes of the former King whom it was to have borne to his native shore.

The Battle of Cape La Hogue, with its consequential actions, effaced the memories of Beachy Head. It broke decisively for the whole of the wars of William and Anne all French pretensions to naval supremacy. It was the Trafalgar of the seventeenth century.

On land the campaign of 1692 unrolled in the Spanish Netherlands, which we now know as Belgium. It opened with a brilliant French success. Namur fell to the French armies. But worse was to follow. In August William marched by night with his whole army to attack Marshal Luxembourg. The French were surprised near Steinkirk in the early morning. Their advanced troops were overwhelmed and routed, and for an hour confusion reigned in their camp. But Luxembourg was equal to the emergency and managed to draw out an ordered line of battle. The British infantry formed the forefront of the Allied attack. Eight splendid regiments, under General Mackay, charged and broke the Swiss in fighting as fierce as had been seen in Europe in living memory. Luxembourg now launched the Household troops of France upon the British division, already strained by its exertions, and after a furious struggle, fought mostly with cold steel, beat it back. Meanwhile from all sides the French advanced and their reinforcements began to reach the field. Count Solms, the Dutch officer and William's relation, who had replaced Marlborough in command of the British contingent, had already earned the cordial dislike of its officers and men. With the remark, "Now we shall see what the bulldogs can do!" he refused to send Mackay the help for which he begged. The British lost two of their best generals and half their numbers killed and wounded, and would not have escaped but for the action of a subordinate Dutch general, Overkirk, afterwards famous in Marlborough's campaigns. William, who was unable to control the battle, shed bitter tears as he watched the slaughter, and exclaimed, "Oh, my poor English!" By noon the whole of the Allied army was in retreat, and although the losses of seven or eight thousand men on either side were equal the French proclaimed their victory throughout Europe.

These events infuriated the English Parliament. The most savage debates took place upon the conduct of Count Solms.

THE NETHERLANDS

1689-1714



The House of Lords carried an address that no English general should be subordinated to a Dutchman, whatever his rank. It was with difficulty that the Government spokesmen persuaded the Commons that there were no English officers fit to be generals in a Continental campaign. Against great opposition supplies were voted for another mismanaged and disastrous year of war. In July 1693 was fought the great Battle of Landen, unmatched in Europe for its slaughter except by Malplaquet and Borodino for over two hundred years. The French were in greatly superior strength. Nevertheless the King determined to withstand their attack, and constructed almost overnight a system of strong entrenchments and palisades in the enclosed country along the Landen stream, within the windings of the Geet. After an heroic resistance the Allies were driven from their position by the French with a loss of nearly twenty thousand men, the attackers losing less than half this total. William rallied the remnants of his army, gathered reinforcements, and, since Luxembourg neglected to pursue his victory, was able to maintain himself in the field. In 1694 he planned an expedition upon Brest, and, according to the Jacobites, Marlborough betrayed this design to the enemy. At any rate Tollemache, the British commander on land, was received by heavy fire from prepared positions, was driven back to his ships with great loss, and presently died of his wounds. There is no doubt that the letter on which the charge against Marlborough was based is a forgery. There is no proof that he gave any information to the French, and it is also certain that they were fully informed from other sources.

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The primitive finances of the English State could ill bear the burden of a European war. In the days of Charles II England was forced to play a minor and sometimes ignominious rôle in foreign affairs largely for lack of money. The Continental ventures of William III now forced English statesmen to a reconstruction of the credit and finances of the country.

The first war Government formed from the newly organised Whig Party possessed in the person of Charles Montagu a first-rate financier. It was he who was responsible for facing this major problem. The English troops fighting on the Continent were being paid from day to day. The reserves of bullion were being rapidly depleted and English financial agents were obsessed by the fear of a complete breakdown.

The first essential step was the creation of some national organ of credit. The Dutch had for some years possessed a National Bank which worked in close collaboration with their Government, and the intimate union of the two countries naturally brought their example to the attention of the Whigs. In collaboration with the Scottish banker William Paterson, Montagu, now Chancellor of the Exchequer, started the Bank of England in 1694 as a private corporation. This institution, while maintaining the principle of individual enterprise and private joint-stock company methods, was to work in partnership with the Government, and was to provide the necessary means for backing the Government's credit.

Montagu was not content merely to stop here. With the help of the philosopher John Locke, and William Loundes of the Treasury, he planned a complete overhaul of the coinage. Within two years the recoinage was carried out, and with this solidly reconstructed financial system the country was able in the future not only to bear the burden of King William's wars, but to face the prolonged ordeal of a conflict over the Spanish Succession. It is perhaps one of the greatest achievements of the Whigs.

At the end of 1694 Queen Mary had been stricken with smallpox, and on December 28 she died, unreconciled to her sister Anne, mourned by her subjects, and lastingly missed by King William. Hitherto the natural expectation had been that Mary would long survive her husband, upon whose frail, fiery life so many assaults of disease, war, and conspiracy had converged. An English Protestant Queen would then reign in her own right. Instead of this, the crown now lay with William alone for life, and thereafter it must come to Anne. This altered the whole position of the Princess, and with it that of the redoubtable Churchills, who were her devoted intimates and champions. From the moment that the Queen had breathed her last Marlborough's interest no longer diverged from William's. He shared William's resolve to break the power of France; he agreed with the whole character and purpose of his foreign policy. A formal reconciliation was effected between William and Anne. Marlborough remained excluded for four more years from all employment, military or civil, at the front or at home; but with his profound gift of patience and foresight upon the drift of events he now gave a steady support to William.

In 1695 the King gained his only success. He recovered

Namur in the teeth of the French armies. This event enabled the war to be brought to an inconclusive end in 1696. It had lasted for over seven years. England and Holland—the Maritime Powers as they were called—and Germany had defended themselves successfully, but were weary of the struggle. Spain was bellicose but powerless, and only the Habsburg Emperor Leopold, with his eyes fixed on the ever-impending vacancy of the Spanish throne, was in earnest in keeping the anti-French confederacy in being. The Grand Alliance began to fall to pieces, and Louis, who had long felt the weight of a struggle upon so many fronts, was now disposed to peace. William was unable to resist the peace movement of both his friends and foes. He saw that the quarrel was still unassuaged; his only wish was to prolong it. But he could not fight alone.

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The Treaty of Ryswick marked the end of the first period in this world war. In fact it was but a truce. Yet there were possibilities that the truce might ripen into a lasting settlement. William and Louis interchanged expressions of the highest mutual regard. Europe was temporarily united against Turkish aggression. Many comforted themselves with the hope that Ryswick had brought the struggle against the exorbitant power of France to an equipoise. This prospect was ruined by the Tories and their allies. In order to achieve lasting peace it was vital that England should be strong and well armed, and thus enabled to confront Louis on equal terms. But the Tories were now in one of their moods of violent reaction from Continental intervention. Groaning under taxation, impatient of every restraint, the Commons plunged into a campaign of economy and disarmament. The moment the pressure of war was relaxed they had no idea but to cast away their arms. England came out of the war with an army of eighty-seven thousand regular soldiers. The King considered that thirty thousand men and a large additional number of officers was the least that would guarantee the public safety and interest. His Ministers did not dare to ask for more than ten thousand, and the House of Commons would only vote seven thousand. The Navy was cut down only less severely. Officers and men were cast upon the streets or drifted into outlawry in the countryside. England, having made every sacrifice and performed prodigies of strength and valour, now fell to the ground in weakness and improvidence when a very little more

perseverance would have made her, if not supreme, at least secure.

The apparent confusion of politics throughout William's reign was largely due to the King's great reluctance to put himself at the disposal of either of the two main party groups. He wished for a national coalition to support a national effort against France, and he was constitutionally averse to committing himself. But as the months passed he was forced to realise the differing attitudes of Whigs and Tories to the Continental war, and a familiar pattern of English politics began to emerge. The Whigs were sensitive to the danger of the French aggression in Europe. They understood the deep nature of the struggle. In spite of their tactless and slighting treatment of William, they were prepared to form on many occasions an effective and efficient war Government. The Tories, on the other hand, resented the country being involved in Continental commitments and voiced the traditional isolationism of the people. The political story of the reign is thus a continuous see-saw. The Whigs managed two or three years of war, and then the Tories would return to power upon a rising tide of war weariness. The landed gentry, the class which largely financed the war through the land-tax, inevitably turns against a war Government and the fruits of warfare are incontinently thrown away. The foundation of the Bank of England strongly aroused the suspicions of this class. They foresaw the advent of a serious rival for political influence in the merchant classes, now enhanced by a formidable credit institution. The Bank had been a Whig creation. The Bank supported Government loans and drew profits from the war. Here was an admirable platform. In 1697 the Whig administration was driven from office upon such themes, and with such a programme Robert Harley, now the rising hope of Toryism, created his power and position in the House of Commons.

This singularly modern figure whom everyone nowadays can understand, born and bred in a Puritan family, originally a Whig and a Dissenter, speedily became a master of Parliamentary tactics and procedure. He understood, we are assured, the art of "lengthening out" the debates, of "perplexing" the issues, and of taking up and exploiting popular cries. In the process of opposing the Court he gradually transformed himself from Whig to Tory and from Dissenter to High Churchman, so that eventually he became a chief agent of the

Tories both in Church and State. Already in 1698 he was becoming virtually their leader in the House of Commons. He it was who conducted the reckless movement for the reduction of the armed forces. He it was who sought to rival the Whig Bank of England with a Tory Land Bank. All the time however he dreamed of a day when he could step above Parliamentary manœuvrings and play a part upon the great world stage of war and diplomacy. Harley was supported by Sir Edward Seymour, the pre-eminent "sham good-fellow" of the age, who marshalled the powerful Tories of Cornwall and the West. In the Lords he was aided by Nottingham and the Earl of Rochester. Together these four men exploited those unworthy moods which from time to time have seized the Tory Party. They froze out and hunted into poverty the veteran soldiery and faithful Huguenot officers. They forced William to send away his Dutch Guards. They did all they could to belittle and undermine the strength of their country. In the name of peace, economy, and isolation they prepared the ground for a far more terrible renewal of the war. Their action has been largely imitated in our own times. No closer parallel exists in history than that presented by the Tory conduct in the years 1696 to 1699 with their similar conduct in the years 1932 to 1937. In each case short-sighted opinions, agreeable to the party spirit, pernicious to national interests, banished all purpose from the State and prepared a deadly resumption of the main struggle. These recurring fits of squalor in the Tory record are a sad counterpoise to the many great services they have rendered the nation in their nobler and more serviceable moods.¹

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William was so smitten by the wave of abject isolationism which swept the governing classes of the Island that he contemplated an abdication and return to Holland. He would abandon the odious and intractable people whose religion and institutions he had preserved and whose fame he had lifted to the head of Europe. He would retort their hatred of foreigners with a gesture of inexpressible scorn. It was a hard victory to master these emotions. Yet if we reflect on his many faults in tact, in conduct, and in fairness during the earlier days of his reign, the unwarrantable favours he had lavished on his Dutchmen, the injustices done to English commanders, his

¹ Written early in 1939.—W. S. C.

uncomprehending distaste for the people of his new realm, we cannot feel that all the blame was on one side. His present anguish paid his debts of former years. As for the English, they were only too soon to redeem their follies in blood and toil.

William's distresses led him to look again to Marlborough, with whom the future already seemed in a great measure to rest. The King's life and strength were ebbing, Anne would certainly succeed, and with the accession of Anne the virtual reign of Marlborough must begin. Marlborough patiently awaited this unfolding of events. William slowly divested himself of an animosity so keen that he had once said that had he been a private person Marlborough and he could only have settled their differences by personal combat. Another cause of mitigation can be discerned. The King had become deeply attached to a young Dutch courtier named Keppel. He had advanced him in a few years from being a page to a commanding position in the State. He had newly created him Earl of Albemarle. There was an affinity between them—honourable, but subtle and unusual. The lonely, childless monarch treated Keppel as if he were a well-beloved adopted son. Keppel was very friendly with Marlborough, and certainly played a part in his reconciliation with the King. Anne's sole surviving son, the Duke of Gloucester, was now nine years old, and it was thought fitting to provide the future heir apparent to the Crown with a governor of high consequence and with an establishment of his own. In the summer of 1698 William invited Marlborough to be governor of the boy prince. "Teach him, my lord," he said, "but to know what you are, and my nephew cannot want for accomplishments." At the same time Marlborough was restored to his rank in the Army and to the Privy Council.

The ice of a long frost once broken, the King felt the comfort in his many troubles of Marlborough's serene, practical, adaptive personality. In July 1698 Marlborough was nominated one of the nine Lords Justices to exercise the sovereign power in William's absence from the kingdom. From this time forth William seemed to turn increasingly towards the man of whose aid he had deprived himself during the most critical years of his reign. He used in peace the soldier he had neglected in war; and Marlborough, though stamped from his youth with the profession of arms, became in the closing years of the reign a leading and powerful politician.

While helping the King in many ways, he was most careful to keep a hold upon the Tory Party, because he knew that in spite of its many vices it was the strongest force in England and representative of some of the deepest traits in the English character. He was sure that no effective foreign policy could be maintained without the support of the Tory Party. He had no desire to become a mere dependant upon the King's favour. The Princess Anne too was a bigoted Tory and Churchwoman. Thus in the last years of William's reign Marlborough stood at the same time well with the King and with the Tory Party who vexed the King so sorely. Above all, he supported William in his efforts to prevent an undue reduction of the Army, and in fact led the House of Lords in this direction. The untimely death in 1700 of the little Duke of Gloucester, who succumbed to the fatal, prevalent scourge of smallpox, deprived Marlborough of his office. He still remained in the closest association with Sidney Godolphin and at the very centre of the political system.

There was now no direct Protestant heir to the English and Scottish thrones. By an Act of Settlement the house of Hanover, descended from the gay and attractive daughter of James I who had briefly been Queen of Bohemia, was declared next in succession after William and Anne. The Act laid down that every sovereign in future must be a member of the Church of England. It also declared that no foreign-born monarch might wage Continental wars without the approval of Parliament; he must not go abroad without consent, and no foreigners should sit in Parliament or on the Privy Council. Thus were recorded in statute the English grievances against William III. Parliament had seen to it that the house of Hanover was to be more strictly circumscribed than he had been. But it had also gone far to secure the Protestant Succession.

The Spanish Succession

NO great war was ever entered upon with more reluctance on both sides than the War of the Spanish Succession. Europe was exhausted and disillusioned. The new-found contacts which had sprung up between William and Louis expressed the heartfelt wishes of the peoples both of the Maritime Powers and of France. But over them and all the rest of Europe hung the long-delayed, long-dreaded, ever-approaching demise of the Spanish Crown. William was deeply conscious of his weakness. He was convinced that nothing would make England fight again, and without England Holland could expect nothing short of subjugation. The King therefore cast himself upon the policy of partitioning the Spanish Empire, which included the southern Netherlands, much of Italy, and a large part of the New World. There were three claimants, whose pretensions are set out in the accompanying table.

The first was France, represented either by the Dauphin or, if the French and Spanish Crowns could not be joined, by his second son, the Duke of Anjou. The next was the Emperor, who claimed as much as he could, but was willing to transfer his claims to his second son by his second wife, the Archduke Charles. Thirdly, there was the Emperor's grandson by his first marriage, the Electoral Prince of Bavaria. The essence of the new Partition Treaty of September 24, 1698, was to give the bulk of the Spanish Empire to the candidate who, if not strongest in right, was at least weakest in power. Louis and William both promised to recognise the Electoral Prince as heir to Charles II of Spain. Important compensations were offered to the Dauphin. This plan concerted between Louis XIV and William III was vehemently resented by the Emperor. As it became known it also provoked a fierce reaction in Spain. Spanish society now showed that it cared above all things for the integrity of the Spanish domains and that the question of the prince who should reign over them all was secondary. At the end of the long struggle Spanish sentiment adopted exactly the opposite view, but at this moment its sole inspiration was an undivided Spanish Empire. However,

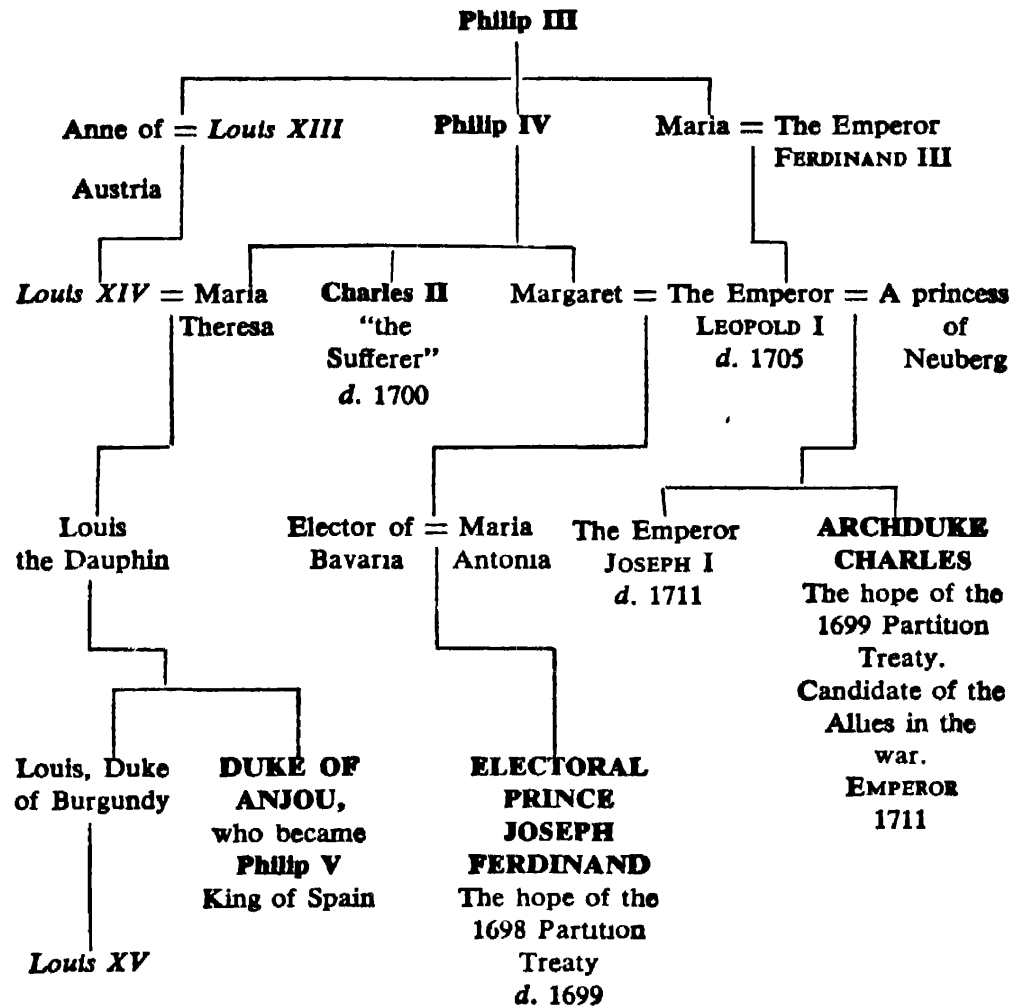
it appeared that Louis and William would be able to override all resistances and enforce their solution.

But now a startling event occurred. The Treaty of Partition had been signed at William's palace at Loo in Holland in September 1698. In February 1699 the Electoral Prince of Bavaria, heir to prodigious domains, the child in whose chubby hands the greatest states had resolved to place the most splendid prize, suddenly died. Why and how he died at this moment did not fail to excite dark suspicions. But the fact glared grimly upon the world; all these elaborate, perilous conversations must be begun over again. By great exertions William and Louis arranged a second Treaty of Partition on June 11, 1699, by which the Archduke Charles was made heir-in-chief. To him were assigned Spain, the overseas colonies, and Belgium, on the condition that they should never be united with the Empire. The Dauphin was to have Naples and Sicily, the Milanese, and certain other Italian possessions.

Meanwhile the feeble life-candle of the childless Spanish King burned low in the socket. To the ravages of deformity and disease were added the most grievous afflictions of the mind. The royal victim believed himself to be possessed by the Devil. His only comfort was in the morbid contemplation of the tomb. All the nations waited in suspense upon his failing pulses and deepening mania. He had however continued on the verge of death for more than thirty years, and one by one the great statesmen of Europe who had awaited this event had themselves been overtaken by the darkness of night. Charles had now reached the end of his torments. But within his diseased frame, his clouded mind, his superstitious soul, trembling on the verge of eternity, there glowed one imperial thought—the unity of the Spanish Empire. He was determined to proclaim with his last gasp that his vast dominions should pass intact and entire to one prince and to one alone. The rival interests struggled for access to his death-chamber. In the end he was persuaded to sign a will leaving his throne to the Duke of Anjou. The will was completed on October 7, and couriers galloped with the news from the Escorial to Versailles. On November 1 Charles II expired.

Louis XIV had now reached one of the great turning-points in the history of France. Should he reject the will, stand by the treaty, and join with England and Holland in enforcing it? But would England stir? On the other hand, should he repudiate the treaty, endorse the will, and defend his grand-

THE SPANISH SUCCESSION



KEY

MALES

Kings of France thus: *Louis XIII.*

Emperors thus. FERDINAND III.

Kings of Spain thus. *Philip III.*

Candidates for the Spanish throne thus: **DUKE OF ANJOU.**

son's claims in the field against all comers? Would England oppose him? Apart from good faith and solemnly signed agreements upon which the ink was barely dry, the choice, like so many momentous choices, was nicely balanced. The Emperor had refused to subscribe to the Second Partition Treaty. Was it valid? Louis found it hard to make up his mind. A conference was held in Madame de Maintenon's room on November 8. It was decided to repudiate the treaty and stand upon the will. On November 16 a famous scene was enacted at Versailles. Louis XIV, at his levee, presented the Spanish Ambassador to the Duke of Anjou, saying, "You may salute him as your King." The Ambassador gave vent to his celebrated indiscretion, "There are no more Pyrenees."

Confronted with this event, William felt himself constrained to recognise the Duke of Anjou as Philip V of Spain. The House of Commons was still in a mood far removed from European realities. Neither party would believe that they could be forced into war against their decision—still less that their decision could change. They had just completed the disarmament of England. They eagerly accepted Louis XIV's assurance that, "content with his power, he would not seek to increase it at the expense of his grandson." A Bourbon prince would become King of Spain, but would remain wholly independent of France. Lulled by this easy promise, the Commons deemed the will of Charles II preferable to either of the Partition Treaties. It was indeed upon these superseded instruments that the Tory wrath was centred. Not only were the treaties denounced as ill-advised in themselves, and treacherous to allies, but that they should have been negotiated and signed in secret was declared a constitutional offence. The Tories even sought to impeach the Ministers responsible.

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But now a series of ugly incidents broke from outside upon the fevered complacency of English politics. A letter from Melfort, the Jacobite Secretary of State at Saint-Germain, was discovered in the English mail-bags, disclosing a plan for the immediate French invasion of England in the Jacobite cause. William hastened to present this to Parliament as a proof of perfidy. At about the same time Parliament began to realise that the language and attitude of the French King about the separation of the Crowns of France and Spain was at the very least ambiguous. It appeared that the Spaniards

had now offered to a French company the sole right of importing Negro slaves into South America. This touched English shipowners nearly, though hardly on a point of honour. It also became apparent that the freedom of the British trade in the Mediterranean was in jeopardy. But the supreme event which roused all England to an understanding of what had actually happened in the virtual union of the Crowns of France and Spain was a tremendous military operation effected under the guise of brazen legality.

Philip V had been acclaimed in Madrid. The Spanish Netherlands rejoiced in his accession. A line of fortresses in Belgium, garrisoned under treaty rights by the Dutch, constituted the main barrier of the Netherlands against a French invasion. Louis resolved to make sure of these barrier fortresses. During the month of February 1701 strong French forces arrived before all the Belgian cities. The Spanish commanders welcomed them with open gates. They had come, it was contended, only to help protect the possessions of His Most Catholic Majesty. The Dutch garrisons, overawed by force, and no one daring to break the peace, were interned. Antwerp and Mons; Namur—King William's famous and solitary conquest—Leau, Venloo, and a dozen secondary strongholds, all passed in a few weeks, without a shot fired, by the lifting of a few cocked hats, into the hands of Louis XIV. Others, like Liège, Huy, and its neighbouring towns, fell under his control through the adhesion to France of their ruler, the Prince-Bishop of Liège. Citadels defended during all the years of general war, the loss or capture of any one of which would have been boasted as the fruits of a hard campaign, were swept away in a month. All that the Grand Alliance of 1689 had defended in the Low Countries in seven years of war melted like snow at Easter.

We have seen in our own time similar frightful losses, accepted by the English people because their mood was for the moment pacific and their interests diverted from European affairs. In 1701 the revulsion was rapid. Europe was roused, and at last England was staggered. Once more the fighting men came into their own. The armies newly dissolved, the officers so lightly dismissed and despised, became again important. Once more the drums began to beat, and smug merchants and crafty politicians turned to the martial class, whom they had lately abused and suppressed. In the early summer the Whig Party felt itself supported by the growing feeling of

the nation. The freeholders of Kent presented a petition to the Commons, begging the House to grant supplies to enable the King to help his allies "before it is too late." The House committed the gentlemen who presented it to prison, an act which showed that Parliament could be as equally despotic as a king. But every day the menace from France was growing plainer. The insular structure in which England had sought to dwell cracked about her ears. In June the House of Commons authorised the King to seek allies; ten thousand men at any rate should be guaranteed to Holland. William felt the tide had set in his favour. By the middle of the year the parties in opposition to him in his two realms, the Tory majority in the House of Commons and the powerful burgesses of Amsterdam, were both begging him to do everything that he "thought needful for the preservation of the peace of Europe"—that is to say, for war.

This process united William and Marlborough. They joined forces. Nor was their partnership unequal. For while King William now saw that he could once again draw the sword of England, he felt the melancholy conviction that he himself would never more wield it. This was no time on either side for half-confidences or old grievances. Someone must carry on. In his heart the King knew there was but one man. On May 31 he proclaimed Marlborough Commander-in-Chief of the English forces assembling in Holland. In June he appointed him Ambassador Extraordinary to the United Provinces. Discretion was given him not only to frame, but, if need be, to conclude treaties without reference to King or Parliament. Though the opportunities of the reign had been marred or missed by their quarrels and misunderstandings, the two warrior-statesmen were at last united. Though much was lost all might be retrieved. The formation of the Grand Alliance had begun.

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It was now, in this deadly atmosphere, that the flash came which produced the British explosion. On September 16, 1701, James II died. Louis visited in state his deathbed at Saint-Germain, and announced to the shadow Court that he recognised James's son as King of England and would ever sustain his rights. He was soon astounded by the consequences of his act. All England was roused by the insult to her independence. The Act of Settlement had decreed the succes-

sion of the Crown. The Treaty of Ryswick had bound Louis, not only in formal terms, but by a gentleman's agreement, to recognise and not to molest William III as King. The domestic law of England was outraged by the arrogance and her treaty rights violated by the perfidy of the French despot. Whigs and Tories vied with one another in Parliament in resenting the affront. The whole nation became resolute for war. Marlborough's treaties, shaped and presented with much knowledge of Parliamentary susceptibilities, were acclaimed; ample supplies were tendered to the Crown. King William was able to sever diplomatic relations with France. The Emperor had already begun the war, and his famous general, Prince Eugene of Savoy, was fighting in the North of Italy.

But now William, against Marlborough's advice, made the mistake of dissolving Parliament. He could not resist the temptation of haling the Tories, so stultified by events, before the tribunal of the electorate. He hoped for an overwhelming Whig majority. But the Tories, though wrong-headed and no longer sure of themselves, nevertheless made a stout party resistance. In spite of their record they were strong enough to carry Harley back to the Speaker's chair in the new Parliament by a majority of four. They forgot their own misdeeds; they never forgave the King. He had played a party trick upon them, and the trick had failed. They longed for his death. Nevertheless they joined with the Whigs in supporting his war. In spite of the electoral changes Marlborough continued to conduct English foreign policy, and all moved forward in armaments and diplomacy towards a struggle with the might of France.

The second Grand Alliance now formed must have seemed a desperate venture to those whose minds were seared by the ill-fortune of William's seven-years war. France had gained without a shot fired all the fortresses and territory so stubbornly disputed. The widest Empire of the world was withdrawn from the Alliance and added to the resources of its antagonists. Spain had changed sides, and with Spain not only the Indies, South America, and a great part of Italy, but the cockpit of Europe—Belgium and Luxembourg. Savoy, a deserter, still rested with France, though her greatest prince was an Austrian general. The Archbishopric of Cologne was also now a French ally. Bavaria, constant to the end in the last war, was to be with France in the new struggle. The Maritime Powers had scarcely a friendly port beyond their

coasts. The New World, except in the North, was barred against them. The Mediterranean had become in effect a French lake. South of Plymouth no fortified harbour lay open to British and Dutch ships. They had their superior fleets, but no bases which would carry them to the inland sea.

On land the whole Dutch barrier had passed into French hands. Instead of being the rampart of Holland, it had become the sally port of France. Louis, occupying the cities of Cologne and Treves, was master of the Meuse and of the Lower Rhine. He held all the Channel ports, and had entrenched himself from Namur through Antwerp to the sea. His winter dispositions disclosed his intention in the spring campaign to renew the invasion of Holland along the same routes which had led almost to its subjugation in 1672. A terrible front of fortresses, bristling with cannon, crammed with troops and supplies, betokened the approaching onslaught. The Dutch sheltered behind inundations and their remaining strongholds. Finally the transference of Bavaria to the side of France laid the very heart of the Habsburg domains open to French invasion. The Hungarians were in revolt against Austrian rule and the Turks were once more afoot. In every element of strategy by sea or by land, as well as in the extent of territory and population, Louis was twice as strong at the beginning of the War of the Spanish Succession as he had been at the Peace of Ryswick. Even the Papacy had changed sides. Clement XI had abandoned the policy of Innocent XI. He espoused the cause of the Great King and his tremendous armies. Such was the prospect, as it seemed, of overwhelming adversity which had opened upon the English people largely as the result of their faction and their fickle moods.

At this moment death overtook King William. "The little gentleman in black velvet," the hero for a spell of so many enthusiastic Jacobite toasts, now intervened. On February 20, 1702, William was riding in the park round Hampton Court on Sorrel, a favourite horse. Sorrel stumbled in the new workings of a mole, and the King was thrown. The broken collarbone might well have mended, but in his failing health the accident opened the door to a troop of lurking foes. Complications set in, and after a fortnight it was evident to him and to all who saw him that death was at hand. He transacted business to the end. His interest in the world drama on which the curtain was about to rise lighted his mind as the shadows closed upon him. He grieved to quit the themes and combina-

tions which had been the labour and the passion of his life. But he saw the approach of a reign and Government in England which would maintain the cause in which his strength had been spent. He saw the only man to whom in war or policy, in the intricate convolutions of European diplomacy, in the party turmoil of England, or amid the hazards of the battlefield, he could bequeath the awful yet inescapable task. He had made his preparations deliberately to pass his leadership to a new champion of the Protestant faith and the liberties of Europe. In his last years he had woven Marlborough into the whole texture of his combinations and policy. In his last hours he commended him to his successor as the fittest man in the realm to guide her councils and lead her armies. William died at fifty-two, worn out by his labours. Marlborough at the same age strode forward against tremendous odds upon the ten years of unbroken victory which raised the British nation to a height in the world it had never before attained.