The Court of Louis the Fourteenth was now to be brought into intimate acquaintance with the Court of William the Third. As the Parliament had interfered to prevent the king of England emulating, even for purposes of national defence, the great armies of the king of France, William, with a pardonable ostentation, resolved that his ambassador to Versailles should not go without the trappings of a magnificent royalty. He could scarcely afford this most expensive outlay, especially as five days before Portland, the ambassador, set forth with his sumptuous retinue on this friendly mission, Whitehall had been burnt down. The Banqueting House was saved with great difficulty. William wrote to Heinsius that the principal portion of the palace was in ashes. "The loss is considerable, but we have no remedy, and we have nothing left but to pray God to preserve us in future from such accidents," writes the equal-minded king.* Portland was received in France with extraordinary courtesy. At every town through which he passed from Calais to Paris, guards of honour attended upon him, and salutes were fired from every citadel. Early in February, he had his private audience of Louis at Versailles. Saint-Simon has described the superb suite of Portland—his horses, his liveries, his equipages, his hospitable table. He appeared, says this careful observer, with a politeness, with the air of a court, with a gallantry and grace, that were surprising. The French were charmed with him; it became the fashion to see him, to fête him, to attend his parties. And yet this envoy of William exhibited a warmth on one occasion which was scarcely in unison with the habitual calmness of his friend and master. He writes to the king on the 16th of February, "Marshal Boufflers has taken an opportunity of speaking to me of the surprise and indignation which I had expressed, rather publicly, at seeing the duke of Berwick and others at Versailles; on which occasion I had said that the blood boiled in my veins at their approach, and that I hoped there was no intention of accustoming me to see the assassins of the king my master. He attempted to soften this in a way which led me to infer that my words had been reported, and that he spoke to me by command. For this reason I deemed it necessary to state still more fully what I thought of the residence of king James in France, and of their tolerating and maintaining in this country villains who had attempted your life." † To Louis himself Portland spoke out in the same blunt manner, especially about those he calls "the assassins;" to whom the great king replied, with regal suavity, that "he was not perfectly acquainted with this affair," and that he would never take the step

* Grimblot, vol. i. p. 144.

† *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 163.

of obliging king James to withdraw from France. William took this matter very quietly. He was not surprised at the reply which Portland had drawn from the king. "It would have been more desirable if you had received such a refusal at the close of your negotiations rather than at the commencement, for it may cause you a good deal of embarrassment throughout, and especially in regard to the most important point of all, the Spanish Succession." * Upon this "most important point of all," as William clearly saw, would the future destinies of Europe depend. The death of the king of Spain was then expected; and to avert a war with France, if that event took place, or to find the means of carrying on a war, was the great anxiety of William's life for his few coming years.

Portland made his public entry into Paris on the 9th of March. His letter to William, describing some circumstances of the ceremonial, is very curious. His disputes with the "conductor of ambassadors," about matters of etiquette, are highly amusing. "In my case," he says, "difficulties have been raised on every conceivable point; and as I do not understand the ceremonial, I am embarrassed by them, and can only meet them with obstinacy, which is here rather indispensable." Comedy cannot imagine a richer scene than the burly Dutchman refusing to come down from the top of his staircase, to meet the representative of the duchess of Burgundy, who refused to go more than half-way up, "messengers passing backwards and forwards between us." † When the English ambassador's carriage was at last fairly on its way to the Louvre, Portland was surprised to see the windows and balconies filled with "all the people of quality in the city," and the crowd on the Pont Neuf expressing their wonder at the solemn reception of the representative of a monarch whose effigy they had been burning for eight years on the same bridge. At last he got into the sublime presence of Louis. The king spoke first. The courtiers said "he was never seen to speak to an ambassador first, or in so familiar a manner;" and they were perfectly astonished that Portland was not embarrassed at the sight of the gorgeous assemblage that surrounded the great potentate ‡

Whilst this parade was going forward in the most magnificent court of Europe, count Tallard had arrived in London, to be introduced to William in the humble cabinet at Kensington. The correspondence of this ambassador with his master shows how narrowly every political movement in this country was watched; what anxiety there was to propitiate the ministers of the king, and the leaders of the opposition; how every indication of popular feeling

* Grimblot, vol. i. p. 181.

† *Ibid.* p. 220.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

was observed and noted down. The French government had active agents in England, as in every other country, whose business it was to transmit the most detailed report of all the political matters that came within their view,—to record the whispers of the drawing-room and the mutterings of the coffee-house. Such an agent was at work in England to prepare the way for Tallard. The "Memorandum on the Affairs of England," written by the Abbé Renaudet, in February, 1698, contains some curious notices of the government and the people, which are not without a permanent interest.* He thinks that the country will be more difficult to govern during peace than it was during the war. He measures the political disposition of the aristocracy by a very different standard than that prevailing at Versailles. "An English noble does not much mind being on bad terms with the Court, inasmuch as he is able to support himself by joining the popular party." He thinks the existing ministry will fall, and therefore it will be necessary for the interests of the French king, "to discover, as far as possible, what are the feelings of the two Houses on this subject," lest too much confidence should be placed in men who are in an unsafe position. He says that this precaution is the more necessary, as "the English nobility were never more discontented than they are at present with those who possess the entire confidence of the master whom they have set over them. They are all convinced that they have no share in his confidence. They see with indignation the Dutch loaded with wealth and honours, especially the last favourite, who is a young man of great insolence and dissipation." † The sagacious Abbé, holding that, "among the Peers, there is a party formed against the Court,' nevertheless recommends the greatest caution in all transactions with discontented persons, lest "the jealousy of the nation should be roused," to suspect designs "against religion and liberty." Flatter the pride of the nobles, by all kinds of attentions; take their part in trivial matters; strive to gain the friendship of those who are in credit; and do nothing except through a third party, in all that may affect interests hostile to the Court,—such are the means by which France was to keep up its influence in England—far more dangerous as an intriguing friend than as an open enemy. His last recommendation is the most insidious: "Too much esteem and respect cannot be shown to the prelates of the Anglican Church, several of whom entertain sentiments favourable to king James."

* Printed in Grimblot, vol. i. p. 228.

† Arnold Jost Keppel, earl of Albemarle, was of an ancient noble family of Guelderland, and came over with William as page of honour. He was not twenty-eight years of age.

The "Instructions of count Tallard, his majesty's Ambassador Extraordinary to the king of England," are conceived in the same spirit of concealed dislike to the government of William, and inculcate the same watchfulness over every manifestation of party hostility or popular discontent. The knowledge displayed of the English political system, and of the temper of the Parliament, shows the range and accuracy of the statesmanship of France. The advantage of having access to the accounts of income and expenditure, of commerce, of the state of the army and navy, of the Crown revenues, of all that relates to finances, is pointed out. These, being laid before Parliament, "are not kept secret; we may, therefore, judge, to a certainty, by their contents, of the real state of England." It is evidently a matter of great satisfaction to France that the Parliament has exhibited "much less submission" to the king; "that the reduction of the army, of the navy, and of the subsidies, disables him from undertaking anything in future without the consent of the nation;" and that, probably, "the difficulties will be found greater in future Parliaments." William had already tasted of the bitter cup which was preparing for him. At the beginning of March, he wrote to Portland, "I cannot conceal from you that I have never been more vexed and melancholy in all my life than I am now."* He was vexed and melancholy to witness the rash haste with which the Parliament resolved to leave the kingdom almost wholly defenceless. A week later, he again wrote to his ambassador at the court of Louis. "I confess that I have so heartfelt a desire to see no more of war during the short period I yet may have to live, that I will not omit anything, which in honour and conscience I can do, to prevent it." He instructed Portland to say for him, that he so ardently desired the preservation of peace that he "was not averse from listening to any proposal calculated to ensure its continuance, even in the event of the demise of the king of Spain"—an occurrence which he feared, with the prescience of a sound statesman, might "again plunge all Europe in war." In the same month,—when there was a general report that the king of Spain was so enfeebled "that the slightest accident might carry him off in a moment,"—William, in a letter to Heinsius, said, "I shudder when I think of the unprepared state of the allies to begin a war, and of the dilapidated state of Spain. It is certain that France is in a condition to take possession of that monarchy, before we shall be able to concert the slightest measures to oppose it. Such is the state of matters here, that I shall be able to contribute little towards the land forces." Rouse

* Grimblot, vol. i. p. 219.

the allies, on all sides, to the necessity of remaining armed, was the earnest exhortation of William to the Grand Pensionary of Holland. "I wish I could be armed too," he sighed, "but I see little appearance of it." *

The lapse of a century and a-half produces mighty changes in the political aspects of the world. There was a sovereign in 1698 in England, who had no voice in the Congress of the Hague—no interests to assert at the peace of Ryswick. He came here in very humble guise—by no means like a ruler who was to found a mighty empire, whose growth has been the terror of Western Europe. "He is mechanically turned, and seems designed by nature rather to be a ship-carpenter than a great prince. . . . . He is resolute, but understands little of war. . . . . He is a man of a very hot temper, soon inflamed, and very brutal in his passion." † Moreover, he is given to brandy drinking, and is subject to convulsive motions all over his body. This was Peter I., Czar of Muscovy, who, whatever Bishop Burnet might have thought, had really some notions of government and war—a tall man, with a taint of something savage in his handsome countenance—but one who knew what curbing savages meant. He was a very incomprehensible monarch to the English people. William hired Mr. Evelyn's house at Sayes Court for the czar, that he might see the building of ships in the dockyards at Deptford and Woolwich. Mr. Evelyn's servant writes to his master, "There is a house full of people, and right nasty. . . . . The king is expected here this day. The best parlour is pretty clean for him to be entertained in." William paid his visit. "The czar had a favourite monkey, which sat down upon the back of his chair. As soon as the king was set down, the monkey jumped upon him in some wrath, which discomposed the whole ceremonial." ‡ Peter ruined Mr. Evelyn's holly-hedge; and after his day's work as a carpenter at Rotherhithe, upon a ship that was building for him, recreated himself with beer and brandy, and smoked his pipe, at an alehouse on Tower Hill. Burnet writes, "After I had seen him often, and conversed much with him, I could not but adore the depth of the Providence of God that had raised up such a furious man to so absolute an authority over a great part of the world." Pieter Timmerman, who worked for wages at Saardam, and cooked his own dinner, became through his extraordinary process of self-education, the instrument of working out designs of Providence of which we are yet far from seeing the full development.

* Grimblot, vol. i. pp. 307-313. † Burnet, vol. iv. p. 396.
‡ Dartmouth's Note on Burnet, vol. iv. p. 396.

CHAPTER III.

Commercial Policy of England.—System of Prohibition.—Restrictions upon the trade of Ireland.—Restrictions upon the trade of Scotland.—Scotch spirit of Commercial Adventure.—African and Indian Company.—Scotch Colony at Darien.

In the commercial policy of England, at the period of which we are now treating, there were two words of magical power, which represented the system upon which all industrial operations were conducted. These words were, Prevention—Encouragement. We open the Statute Book. At one page we find "An Act to prevent." We turn a few leaves, and we find "An Act to encourage." There is some home manufacture to be supported; there is some foreign product to be prohibited. To carry out these Statutes required a vigilance of no ordinary nature. Officers of the government were constantly scouring over the sands and marshes of the coast, to embarrass the operations of a most indefatigable race, known by the name of smugglers, with which we are still familiar, and by the name of owlers, which has lost its place in our language. Owling and smuggling were carried on upon a large scale, by considerable capitalists. In the Session of 1698, the Parliament proceeded against some dozen of opulent merchants with foreign names, by impeaching them of high crimes and misdemeanours, for fraudulently importing foreign alamodes and lustrings, and for illegally exporting native wool. They carried on this traffic in vessels regularly passing between France and the English coast, where the smugglers were waiting to bear away the silks to the interior, and the owlers were at hand with a return cargo of wool for Picardy. The delinquent merchants pleaded guilty at the bar of the Lords. One was fined ten thousand pounds; one, three thousand pounds; two, fifteen hundred pounds each; three, a thousand pounds each; and one, five hundred pounds. These sums were applied to the building of Greenwich Hospital.

If the paternal system of prohibition, which all governments are so unwilling to relinquish, had been confined to countries then regarded as natural rivals, if not as natural enemies, a century and a-half might have elapsed before even well-informed Englishmen would have regarded the principle as fallacious and injurious to