

CHAPTER LI.

LOUIS XIV.—EXTERNAL HISTORY AND CONQUESTS
FROM 1661-1679.

State of Europe in 1661.—Louis XIV. had skilful ministers, the most united and best situated kingdom in Europe, an authority which never experienced any opposition, finances which Colbert had put in good order, an army which Louvois had organized under the best generals, and behind this army a brave nation of twenty millions of souls. Meanwhile Spain was approaching that utter decay towards which the inordinate ambition of Philip II. had hastened her: Philip IV. (1621-1665) had lost Catalonia and the kingdom of Naples for several years; Artois, Cerdania, Roussillon, and Portugal, forever. Germany was chaos itself. Austria, governed by a prince of inferior ability, Leopold I. (1657-1705), was without influence in the Empire, and had enough to do to defend herself against the Turks. Italy no longer counted for anything. Sweden was exhausted by her heroic efforts under the great Gustavus. The English had just re-established the dynasty of the Stuarts (1660), which by its opposition to the national sentiment was for a quarter of a century to neutralize their influence and hinder their prosperity. Finally, though the Netherlands were rich and their navy powerful, they were without territory, and consequently without lasting strength. Louis XIV., as he contemplated Europe when he determined to take the government into his own hands, saw there neither king nor people who could equal him and France; and the first acts of his foreign policy revealed a sense of his own dignity, even a haughtiness which is astonishing, but which was justified by success.

First Acts of the Foreign Policy of Louis XIV.—His ambassador at London was insulted by the followers of the Spanish ambassador in a question of precedence. Hearing of this, the king recalled his envoy at Madrid, sent home the Spanish envoy, and threatened his father-in-law with war

if he did not make most satisfactory amends. Philip IV. agreed (1662), and the Count of Fuentes declared in his name, at Fontainebleau, in the presence of the court and the foreign ambassadors, "that the Spanish ministers should not henceforth contend for precedence with those of France." Pope Alexander VII. was forced to undergo a similar humiliation. Portugal was feebly defending her independence against the Spaniards; Louis helped to seat the house of Braganza upon the throne (1665). The Barbary pirates infested the Mediterranean; the king constituted himself protector of all the nations bordering on the sea or navigating it. His admiral, the Duke of Beaufort, gave chase to the pirates with fifteen ships, set fire to their dens in Algiers and Tunis, and forced these barbarians to respect the name of France and the commerce of Christian nations (1665). The new king of England, Charles II., sold Dunkirk to Louis for five millions (1662): it was immediately surrounded by strong fortifications, and became an object of regret and terror to the English. At the same time he concluded an alliance with the States-General in order to secure in advance their neutrality toward his projects against Spain. War having broken out, in 1665, between the Dutch and the English, Louis joined the former, but was careful not to engage many of his ships. By the treaty of Breda he restored three West India islands to the English in exchange for Acadia (1667).

Louis aided the emperor against the Turks, and the Venetians in the defence of Candia. This assistance lent to the enemies of the Turks was a deviation from the ancient policy of France. Louis would soon also renounce the other parts of its policy, the alliance with the Protestant States. He was to undertake to play the part of Charles V. and Philip II.,—that of armed chief of Catholicism and absolute monarch. He was to aim, as they did, at preponderance in Europe, and this ambition was to be the misfortune of France as it had already been of Spain.

War in Flanders (1667); Right of Devolution.—The death of the king of Spain in 1665 was the occasion of the first war of Louis XIV. Philip IV. left only one son, four years old, the child of his second wife. The infanta Maria Theresa, who had been for six years queen of France, was born of a former marriage. It was the custom in the Netherlands that the paternal heritage should *devolve* upon the children

of the first marriage, to the exclusion of the second. Louis XIV. accordingly claimed these provinces in the name of his wife. The court of Spain maintained that this right of devolution was a civil custom which could not be applied to the transmission of states; and that moreover the infanta, on marrying, had renounced all right to the monarchy of her father. The French ministry replied that the renunciations were null because Maria Theresa was a minor at the time, and because her dower had not been paid. But the king of France counted much more on his arms than on his reasons. The Southern Netherlands, the natural continuation of the French territory and the French idiom, had no aversion to a union with France.

"Spain lacked a navy, an army, and money. She had no longer any commerce; her manufactures of Seville and Segovia had greatly declined; agriculture was destroyed; the population which had amounted to twenty millions under Arab rule, was now reduced to six millions" (Mignet). In order to deprive her of all help from outside, Louis XIV. made sure of the neutrality of England and the United Provinces, obtained from the German princes of the League of the Rhine a promise to furnish him troops, and even won over the emperor.

It was a military promenade rather than an invasion. The king entered Flanders with fifty thousand men and Turenne (1667). Town after town fell, only Lille making any serious resistance. In three months the entire province was subjugated. At the approach of winter a truce was proposed to the Spaniards: the governor of the Netherlands, Castel-Rodrigo, haughtily refused it. This fit of pride was punished by additional loss of territory. Preparations having been made with the utmost secrecy, suddenly ten thousand men collected by twenty different routes assembled the same day in Franche-Comté, a few leagues from Besançon, and the great Condé appeared at their head. In three weeks Franche-Comté was subjugated.

These rapid successes disturbed the neighboring states, especially the Netherlands; they concluded with England and Sweden the Triple Alliance, which offered its mediation to France, and imposed it upon Spain. Turenne and Condé desired that no attention should be paid to it, and promised the conquest of the Netherlands before the end of the campaign. They were right, for none of the three medi-

atorial powers were ready for the war. But this time Louis XIV. was not bold enough. The king of Spain seemed about to die, and had no heir. Louis thought it was useless to fight for a few cities when he was going to obtain an empire, and signed the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1668), which took from him Franche-Comté and left him only his conquests in Flanders.

Causes of War with Holland. — Louis XIV. did not forgive the Dutch for this interference in his affairs. He had been shocked by the republican liberty of their ambassador, Van Beuningen, *schepen* of Amsterdam, in the conferences of Aix-la-Chapelle. He complained also of the insolence of their journalists, and particularly of the insulting medals which had been struck off after the peace.

But however absolute a king may be, he does not set Europe on fire for such trifles. What historians have called a war of medals, that is, of personal resentment, was also a war of tariffs. Louis XIV. doubtless was not fond of those proud republicans; but Colbert detested them as commercial rivals of the French. The Dutch, attacked by tariffs, defended themselves by additional duties on French wines, brandies, and manufactures (1668). Louvois, for his part, considered that "the true method of succeeding in the conquest of the Spanish Netherlands was to humiliate the Dutch." Thus it happened that the minister of finance was not opposed to the plans of the minister of war, and the king himself was influenced by his resentments to accept them. Yet it was an impolitic war, which overthrew the whole system of alliances with the Protestant states established by Henry IV. and Richelieu. But Louis XIV. was much more the successor of Philip II. than the heir of the Béarnais.

Alliances formed against Holland. — Louis first undertook to dissolve the Triple Alliance. It was not difficult to detach Sweden, the ancient ally of France, by an annual subsidy. England would have hesitated longer if she had been consulted, but Louis XIV. made his application to the king. Charles II., entertaining ideas of absolutism, wished to govern without the assistance of Parliament, and in order to obtain the money he needed, allowed himself to be pensioned by France. Henrietta, sister of Charles II. and wife of Philip of Orleans, went to Dover, under pretext of visiting her brother, and induced him to unite with Louis

XIV. against the United Provinces (1670). At the same time De Lionne renewed the treaties with the emperor and the princes of the League of the Rhine, who promised their neutrality or their co-operation.

This diplomatic campaign was terminated in 1671. In the following spring hostilities broke out. Thirty ships joined the English fleet of sixty. Ninety thousand men were assembled along the line from Sedan to Charleroi; the German princes furnished about twenty thousand more. The king led this magnificent army in person; Condé, Turenne, and Luxembourg, commanded under him; Vauban was to take the cities. What could the Netherlands oppose to such an enemy? They had a formidable navy; admirals who had been, up to that time, regarded as the greatest of the age, — Van Tromp and De Ruyter; rich colonies; an immense commerce; but they could count upon scarcely twenty-five thousand militiamen, badly equipped and without discipline, and upon the men promised them by the elector of Brandenburg. They were, moreover, weakened by internal divisions; there were two parties: one, directed by John de Witt, grand pensioner of Holland, was entirely devoted to the cause of aristocratic liberty; the other desired to reinstate the young Prince of Orange in the official position held by his ancestors, and, taking advantage of the present danger, caused him to be appointed captain-general at the age of twenty-two years.

Invasion of the Netherlands (1672). — Meantime Louis XIV. was advancing along the Meuse, in the territories of the bishop of Liège, his ally, then along the right bank of the Rhine from Wesel to Toll-Huys. There some of the country people informed the Prince of Condé that the drought of the season had rendered the river fordable. The approach was easy, and only four or five hundred cavalry and two small regiments of infantry without cannon were to be seen on the other shore. The king and his great army therefore crossed almost unopposed and without the slightest difficulty. Such was King Louis's passage of the Rhine, celebrated as if it had been one of the greatest events that had occurred within the memory of man.

The Rhine crossed, the Netherlands were open to invasion. The provinces of Overijssel, Gelderland, and Utrecht submitted without attempting to defend themselves; there was scarcely an hour in the day that the king did not receive



TURENNE.

From a print in the National Library.

news of some conquest. The generals proposed to march without delay upon Amsterdam. Louis preferred first to garrison the towns; the army was consequently weakened and its operations retarded. Then the Dutch took courage, and placing all power in the hands of one man, elevated William of Orange to the stadtholderate. At the same time the infuriated populace tore into pieces the illustrious leaders of the republican party, John and Cornelius de Witt.

First Coalition against France (1673). — The Prince of Orange at once gave a new turn to affairs; he cut the dykes around Amsterdam and forced the French to retire before the flood. He sent ambassadors to all the courts of Europe to stir them up against France; he treated with Spain, with the Duke of Lorraine, and with the emperor. Several princes of the League of the Rhine deserted. The result was the Grand Alliance of the Hague, the first of the great coalitions against France.

Campaign of 1673; Capture of Maastricht. — But while the alliance was making its preparations Louis invested Maastricht, and Vauban took it for him. Marshal Luxembourg held the Dutch in check; Turenne, who the preceding winter had driven the elector of Brandenburg as far as the Elbe, stopped the imperial forces, and the navy, aided by England, fought four battles against De Ruyter. In the last months of the year the imperial forces gathered in greater numbers, effected a junction with the Prince of Orange, captured Bonn, and quartered themselves in the electorate of Cologne.

Conquest of Franche-Comté (1674). — The war was becoming European. Louis XIV. changed its plan. He abandoned the Netherlands, turned all his forces against Spain, and advanced upon Franche-Comté. This second conquest was almost as rapid as the first; Besançon was taken in nine days, and the whole province in six weeks: it has remained ever since in the possession of France.

Turenne saves Alsace (1674-1675). — The allies meditated, for this year, a formidable double invasion of France, by way of Lorraine and the Netherlands. Turenne was to prevent the one attack; Condé, the other. Turenne took the offensive; he passed the Rhine at Philippsburg, with twenty thousand men, burned the Palatinate, gained a number of small battles (July, 1674), in which he exhibited tactical

resources hitherto unknown. But his military science could not always compensate for the want of numbers. Strassburg, violating its neutrality, allowed seventy thousand Germans to pass into Alsace. It was believed at court that the province was lost, and Louvois ordered the marshal to retire into Lorraine. But Turenne appealed to the king for liberty of action. He remained in Alsace as long as he thought proper, annoyed the enemy incessantly, and, winter coming on, repassed the Vosges as if to take up his quarters in Lorraine. Suddenly, at the beginning of December, he broke up camp, traversed the whole length of the Vosges, and, after a march of twenty days over frightful roads, fell upon the imperial forces, who supposed that he was fifty leagues away: he defeated them at Mülhausen, at Colmar, at Türkheim, and drove them beyond the Rhine with great loss. This campaign, prepared with so much secrecy, executed with such far-seeing skill, and terminated in six weeks, excited enthusiasm throughout all France.

Battle of Senef (1674). — While Turenne was victoriously driving back the invaders in the east, Condé was preventing ninety thousand Spaniards and Dutch from entering Champagne. He had entrenched himself in a position which the Prince of Orange dared not attack. Then, following the latter, he attacked his rear-guard at Senef, where a very obstinate and bloody battle was fought. The next day the two armies separated with a loss of seven or eight thousand men on each side. Condé forced the Prince of Orange to raise the siege of Oudenarde; but Grave, the last remnant of the French conquests in the Netherlands, soon after opened its gates.

Last Campaign of Turenne and Condé (1675). — In the spring Turenne again began operations in the Palatinate. The emperor sent Montecuccoli, who was considered a consummate tactician, to oppose him. They occupied six weeks in following and watching each other. Finally they were about to give battle near Salzbach, when the marshal, while examining the position of a battery, was killed by a stray shot. His death was a public calamity. Louis XIV. had him interred at St. Denis, in the burial-place of kings. By Turenne's death all the fruits of a well-conducted campaign were lost; the French, discouraged, fled towards the Rhine: Montecuccoli penetrated into Alsace. At the same time the Duke of Lorraine hastened to besiege Trier with

twenty thousand men; Créqui endeavored to aid him, but was beaten at Consarbrück, and forced to capitulate.

After the death of Turenne, the Prince of Condé was sent into Alsace to stop the progress of Montecuccoli and reanimate the courage of the troops. He compelled the imperial forces to raise the siege of Zabern and Hagenau, and to recross the Rhine. This was his last achievement; he ceased to appear at the head of armies, and retired to Chantilly, where he lived among men of letters, philosophers even, till 1686.

Campaign of 1676; Naval Victories; Duquesne and D'Éstrées. — The following year the warfare of sieges, which Louis XIV. preferred, was renewed. Condé and Bouchain were captured; Maastricht, besieged by the Prince of Orange, was delivered; but the Germans recaptured Philippsburg. An unexpected triumph consoled France for these reverses and trifling victories. The inhabitants of Messina, being in revolt against Spain, had placed themselves under the protection of Louis XIV. (1675): he sent them a fleet with Duquesne as second in command. This great sailor, born at Dieppe in 1610, had first been owner and captain of a privateer; in the royal navy he passed through all the grades and became lieutenant-general, but could go no higher because of being a Protestant. On the coasts of Sicily he had, as opponents, De Ruyter and the Spaniards. A first battle, near the island of Stromboli, was indecisive (1676); a second, off Syracuse, resulted in a complete victory, and De Ruyter was killed. After crushing the enemy's fleet in a final encounter at Palermo, France had for some time the empire of the Mediterranean (1676). In that same year D'Éstrées recaptured Cayenne and destroyed in the port of Tobago a squadron of ten of the enemy's vessels. In 1678 he captured the island itself and all the Dutch factories in Senegal. The French flag was supreme on the Atlantic as well as on the Mediterranean.

Campaign of 1677; Créqui and Luxembourg; Battle of Cassel. — Créqui had succeeded to Turenne in Germany and Luxembourg to Condé in the Netherlands. The first conducted a campaign worthy of Turenne. By a succession of skilful marches he protected Lorraine and Alsace against an adversary superior in numbers, and took Freiburg, thus transferring the war to the right bank of the Rhine. The second, with the king's assistance, took Valenciennes, then

Cambrai, and, with Monsieur, gained the victory of Cassel over the Prince of Orange. Ghent opened her gates the following year.

Defection of England (1678).—An unforeseen event decided Louis to make peace. The English viewed with anxiety the progress of his influence on the continent, and particularly the development of his navy; they were murmuring against their own king, bound by alliance to this formidable neighbor; the national opposition became every day more active in Parliament. After 1674 Charles II. had ceased to act against the Dutch; in 1678 he was forced to unite with them, to consent to the marriage of his niece Mary with the stadtholder, and to declare himself against France.

Treaty of Nymwegen (1678); General Pacification (1679).—Thereupon Louis XIV. made proposals of peace to the United Provinces. The Prince of Orange tried to break up the negotiations by surprising, at St. Denis, Marshal Luxembourg, who was confiding in an armistice; but he was repulsed after a desperate engagement of six hours.

The Netherlands, England, Spain, and the emperor negotiated with Louis at Nymwegen, the elector of Brandenburg at Saint-Germain, the king of Denmark at Fontainebleau (August, 1678–September, 1679). Again it was Spain which paid the costs of the war; she abandoned Franche-Comté, and, in the Netherlands, gave up the last two cities of Artois, with twelve other places, — Valenciennes, Cambrai, etc., — which Vauban immediately covered with fortifications so as to make them a barrier for France. But deviating from the commercial policy of Colbert, France conceded to the Dutch the abolition of the tariff of 1667, much to the injury of the merchant marine, as well as of French industries.

The treaty of Nymwegen marks the zenith of the reign of Louis XIV.; only a short time after, the magistrates of Paris conferred upon him the title of the Great. But successful as this war had been, it was nevertheless the origin of the misfortunes of the latter part of the reign; for it had accustomed Europe to league together against France, and had pointed out the man whom she should take for chief of her councils, and the country which should be the mainstay of resistance. The war with the Netherlands prepared the future greatness of William III. and England. If Louis

XIV. had continued the ally of the Dutch, a great navy would have been united to that of France, to contend with the English for the control of the ocean. When, on the contrary, the United Provinces had joined forces with Great Britain, France had, instead of an adversary within reach, an enemy with whom she could never quite grapple.