Soon after his accession, Gustavus received an embassy from James I. of Britain, exhorting him to make peace with his neighbours. This was seconded by another from Hol­land. But as the king perceived that the Danish monarch intended to take every opportunity of crushing him, he re­solved to act with such vigour as might convince him that he was not easily to be overcome. Accordingly, he invaded Denmark with three different armies at once ; and though the enemy’s superiority at sea gave them great advantages, and the number of the king’s enemies distracted his atten­tion, he carried on the war with such spirit, that, in 1613, a peace was concluded on terms favourable to himself. This war being finished, Gustavus applied himself to civil polity, and made some reformation in the laws of Sweden. In 1615, hostilities were commenced against Russia, on account of the refusal of that court to repay some money which had been formerly lent. The king entered Ingria, took Kex- holm by storm, and was laying siege to Plescov, when, by the mediation of James I, peace w as concluded, on condi­tion of the Russians repaying the money, and yielding to Sweden some part of their territory. In this and the for­mer war, notwithstanding the shortness of their duration, Gustavus learned the rudiments of the military art, for which he soon became so famous. He is said to have taken every opportunity of improvement with a quickness of under­standing seemingly more than human. In one campaign, he not only learned, but improved, all the military maxims of La Gardie, a celebrated general ; brought the Swedish army to a more steady and regular discipline ; and formed an invincible body of Finlanders, who had afterwards a very considerable share in the victories of Sweden.

Peace was no sooner concluded with Russia, than Gus­tavus was crowned with great solemnity at Upsala. Soon afterwards he ordered his general La Gardie to acquaint the Polish commander Codekowitz, that as the truce between the two kingdoms, which had been concluded for two years, was now expired, he desired to be certainly informed whe­ther he was to expect peace or war from his master. In the mean time, having borrowed money of the Dutch for the redemption of a town from Denmark, he had an inter­view on the frontiers with Christiern, the king of that coun­try. At this interview, the two monarchs conceived the utmost esteem and friendship for each other ; and Gusta­vus obtained a promise, that Christiern would not assist Sigismund in any design he might form against Sweden. In the mean time, receiving no satisfactory answer from Poland, Gustavus began to prepare for war. Sigismund entered into a negociation, and made some pretended con­cessions, with a view to seize Gustavus by treachery ; but the latter having some intimation of his design, the whole negociation was changed into reproaches and threats on the part of Gustavus.

Immediately after this, Gustavus made a tour in disguise through Germany, and married Eleonora the daughter of the elector of Brandenburg. He then resolved to enter heartily into a war with Poland ; and with this view set sail for Riga with a great fleet, which carried 20,000 men. The place was well fortified, and defended by a body of veterans, enthusiastically attached to Sigismund ; but after a vigorous siege, the garrison, being reduced to extremity, were ob­liged to capitulate, and were treated with great clemency.

After the reduction of Riga, the Swedish monarch enter­ed Courland, where he reduced Mittau ; but ceded it again on the conclusion of a truce for one year. Sigismund, how­ever, no sooner had time to recover himself, than he began to form new enterprises against thc Swedes in Prussia ; but Gustavus setting sail with his whole fleet for Dantzig, where the king of Poland then resided, so defeated his measures, that he was obliged to prolong the truce for another year. Sigismund was not yet apprised of his danger, and refused to listen to any terms of accommodation : Gustavus enter­ing Livonia, defeated the Polish general, and took Dorpat, Hockenhauson, and several other places of less importance ; after which, entering Lithuania, he took the city of Birsen. Notwithstanding this success, Gustavus proposed peace on the same equitable terms as before ; but Sigismund was still infatuated with the hopes that, by means of the empe­ror of Germany, he should be able to conquer Sweden. Gustavus finding him inflexible, resolved to push his good fortune. His generals, Horn and Thurn, defeated the Poles in Semigallia. Gustavus himself, with 150 ships, set sail for Prussia, where he landed at Pillau. This place was imme­diately surrendered to him, as were several other towns. Sigismund, alarmed at the great progress of Gustavus, sent a body of forces to oppose him, and to prevent Dantzig from falling into his hands. But this measure did not produce any powerful effect; and in May 1627, Gustavus arrived with fresh forces before Dantzig, which he would probably have carried, had he not been wounded in the belly by a can- not-shot. The states of Holland sent ambassadors to me­diate a peace between the two crowns; but Sigismund, de­pending on the assistance of the emperor of Germany and king of Spain, determined to hearken to no terms, and resolv­ed to make a winter campaign. The king of Sweden was however so well intrenched, and all his forts were so strongly garrisoned, that the utmost efforts of the Poles were to no purpose. The city of Dantzig, in the mean time, made such a desperate resistance as greatly irritated him. In a sea en­gagement the Swedish fleet defeated that of the enemy ; after which Gustavus, having blocked up the harbour with his fleet, pushed his advances on the land side with incredible vigour. He made a surprising march over a morass fifteen miles broad, assisted by bridges of a peculiar construction, over which he carried a species of light cannon invented by himself. By this unexpected manœuvre he obtained the command of the city in such a manner, that the garri­son were on the point of surrendering, when, by a sudden swell of the Vistula, the Swedish works were ruined, and the king was obliged to raise the siege. In otlier respects, however, the affairs of Gustavus proceeded with their usual good fortune. His general Wrangel defeated the Poles before Brodnitz. At Stum the king gained another and more considerable victory in person. The emperor had sent 5000 foot and 2000 horse under Arnheim, who joined the main army commanded by the Polish general Coniec- spolski, in order to attack the Swedish army encamped at Quidzin. The enemy were so much superior in num­ber, that the friends of Gustavus warmly dissuaded him from attacking them. But the resolution of the king was not to be shaken, and the engagement commenced. The Swedish cavalry charged with such impetuosity, contra­ry to their sovereign’s express order, that they were al­most surrounded by the enemy ; but, coming up to their assistance, he pushed the enemy’s infantry with so much vigour, that they gave way, and retreated to a bridge that had been thrown over the Werdcr. But here they were disappointed, for the Swedes had already taken posses­sion of the bridge. A new action ensued, more bloody than the former, in which the king was exposed to great danger, and thrice narrowly escaped being taken prisoner ; but at last the Poles were totally defeated, and with im­mense loss. The slaughter of the German auxiliaries was so great, that Arnheim scarcely carried off one half of the troops which he brought into the field. This defeat did not hinder the Polish general from attempting the siege of Stum ; but here he was as unsuccessful as in his previous enterprises. Arnheim was recalled, and was succeeded by Henry of Saxe-Lauenburg and Philip Count Mansfeldt. The change of general officers, however, produced no good consequences to the Poles ; a famine and plague raged in their camp, so that they were at last obliged to consent to a truce for six years, to expire in the month of June 1635.