cessor was speedily found for her in the person of Elizabeth Farnese, niece of the duke of Parma, who was suggested by Alberoni, at that time agent for Parma at Madrid. The new queen speedily obtained unlimited ascendency over her husband’s mind, and she displayed an unbridled ambition and a capacity for intrigue astounding in one who had been brought up in complete retirement. As Philip’s sons by his first wife would exclude her own children from the Spanish throne, she was anxious to obtain for the latter the reversion of the duchies of Parma and Tuscany, to which she had an eventual claim. With this end in view she encouraged her husband’s designs in Italy, while personal ambition made her eager to see him on the French throne. Her favour gave the conduct of Spanish affairs for a short period to her countryman Alberoni, one of the strangest personages of the 18th century. The son of a gardener at Piacenza, he had sought a career in the church, and had come to Spain in the suite of Vendôme, whose favour he had won by com­bining the functions of a cook and a buffoon. After the death of his patron he remained in Spain, and conceived an ardent affection for the country of his adoption. Raised to power by the part he had played in effecting the king’s marriage, he determined to exalt Spain from its long de­pression to the position it had once occupied in Europe. His domestic reforms showed that he had a real capacity for government. Commerce and industry revived under his patronage ; the army was reorganized, and the revenue increased. But his chief attention was given to the navy, the real foundation of the former greatness of Spain. Foreigners who had known the country under Charles II. or during the Succession War were astounded at the strides which it had made under the new administration. Alberoni himself is said to have assured Philip that with five years of peace he would make him the most powerful sovereign of Europe. But these years of peace he was not destined to have. Alberoni cordially approved the Italian designs of Philip, and hoped to employ the restored might of Spain in freeing his native country from the hated rule of Austria. He had less sympathy with the king’s hankering after the French crown and his enmity to the regent Orleans. But he held office only by the royal favour, and could not venture to set up his own will against that of his master. He was convinced, and not without reason, that everything would go well if he could secure the English alliance.

But the attitude of Spain had already awakened sus­picion in France, and the ready mind of Dubois had conceived a plan for thwarting Alberoni. He determined to desert the policy of Louis XIV. and to conclude a close alliance between France and England. This was to be based upon the common danger from rival pretenders, which urged the houses of Orleans and Hanover to main­tain the provisions of the treaty of Utrecht. An agree­ment was arranged between the two states in 1716, and, being joined by Holland in January 1717, was known as the Triple Alliance. This was a great blow to Alberoni, and made him anxious to postpone all hostilities until his preparations were complete. But his hand was forced by the indignation excited in Philip V.’s mind by an insult offered to him by the emperor. The grand inquisitor of Spain was arrested in Lombardy as a rebel against Charles III., his lawful king. Philip V. decided for an immediate rupture, and Alberoni against his will had to send an expedition to Sardinia, which overran the island in 1717. The enthusiasm excited in Spain by the unwonted news of a military success was increased in 1718 when another Spanish force occupied Sicily. But meanwhile Charles VI. had appealed to France and Eng­land for assistance against this rupture of the treaty of

Utrecht. The Triple Alliance, reinforced by the junction of Austria, became the Quadruple Alliance (August 1718). The resolution of the allies was convincingly displayed in a naval encounter in which Admiral Byng destroyed the Spanish fleet off Cape Passaro.

Hitherto the only fault to be found with Alberoni’s schemes is that they were attempted prematurely, and this was the fault of the king rather than of the minister. But the Quadruple Alliance drove him in despair to form those far-reaching projects which are generally associated with his name, and which have given rise to the unjust impression that his whole policy was chimerical and unsound. To meet the hostility of England and France he must make use of internal divisions. He invited the Pretender to Spain, prepared an expedition in his behalf, and concerted with Count Görz, the minister of Charles XII., a grand scheme by which Sweden and Russia were to combine in supporting the Jacobites against George I. At the same time, through the Spanish envoy Cellamare, he organized a conspiracy among the numerous opponents of the regent. All these schemes broke down simul­taneously. Charles XII. was killed at the siege of an obscure town in Norway ; Görz was executed by his successor ; the Spanish fleet which was to carry the Pre­tender to England was wrecked ; the conspiracy of Cel­lamare was discovered and suppressed. France declared war, and sent an army under Berwick across the Pyrenees. An English fleet gratified the national love of a maritime monopoly by burning along the Spanish coast the vessels and docks which Alberoni had created. The emperor, who had just ended a war with Turkey by the treaty of Passarowitz, was able to send a force which succeeded in recovering Sicily. Alberoni was sacrificed to appease the enemies of Spain, and was exiled from the kingdom he had served so loyally in December 1719. A month later Philip V. accepted the terms imposed upon him by the Quadruple Alliance. He had to confirm his renunciation of the French crown, and also to abandon all claims on the provinces of Spain which had been ceded to Austria by the treaties of Utrecht and Rastatt. He also allowed the emperor to retain Sicily, the duke of Savoy being compensated with Sardinia. On the other hand Charles VI.’s pretensions to the Spanish crown were definitely abandoned, and the allies recognized the eventual claims to Parma and Tuscany of Philip’s children by his second marriage, on condition that those duchies should never be united with Spain.

In spite of the conclusion of peace, Philip continued to cherish his animosity against Charles VI., especially as the latter showed an inclination to evade the condition about Parma and Tuscany by encouraging other claimants to come forward. To gratify this passion, Philip went so far as to lay aside his old enmity against the duke of Orleans, and to authorize the negotiation of a close alliance with France. His eldest son, Don Luis, was married to a daughter of the regent, and Louis XV. was betrothed to the infanta Maria Anna. But the death of Orleans in 1723 gave a new direction to the king’s policy. In 1724 Europe was astounded by the news that Philip had abdicated in favour of Don Luis, and had gone into retirement at San Ildefonso. This act was generally attri­buted to the indolence and superstition which formed the basis of his character, but the real motive was undoubtedly a desire to remove the chief obstacle to his accession in France. Louis XV., however, disappointed his expecta­tions by continuing to live, and the queen soon wearied of her unwonted seclusion. Luis only survived his accession eight months, and to the surprise of the world Philip V. emerged from his retreat to resume the crown which he had laid down of his own accord.