marquis of Las Minas, who found the Spanish army at Tortona and hastened to withdraw it from Italy into Savoy, which Don Philip had occupied since 1742. The Austrians at once besieged and captured Genoa, thus cutting off the possibility of a renewed invasion of Italy, except through the well-guarded passes of the Alps. From this time the military operations ceased to have any direct importance for Spain, and all interest centred in the negotiations which were carried on at Breda in 1747 and transferred to Aix-la-Chapelle in the next year. The chief obstacle to peace was the demand of a principality for Don Philip, which Ferdinand VI. persisted in as necessary for the honour of Spain. Maria Theresa had already made sacrifices to Prussia and to Sardinia, and resented the idea of ceding any more of her territories. But the persistence of England carried the day, and in the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (October 1748) Don Philip obtained Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla as an hereditary principality, on condition that they should revert to Austria on extinction of his male descendants. This was the sole advantage gained by Spain. Austria retained Lombardy, shorn of the portion promised to Charles Emmanuel ; and the commercial and naval ascendency of England remained unshaken. The recovery of Gibraltar, which at one time Philip V. had confidently expected, was now further off than ever.

Ferdinand VI. was as feeble in health and as averse to business as his father had been, but he was equally obstinate on certain points. He would have nothing to do with the aggressive policy of his stepmother or with the Bourbon schemes for the humiliation of England. His accession broke off the Family Compact, and gave to Spain the unaccustomed boon of thirteen years’ peace. His aim was to hold the balance between the rival powers of western Europe, and in this he was aided by the discord between his two ministers, Ensenada and Carvalho, of whom the former favoured France and the latter England. When Kaunitz, the Austrian envoy at Versailles, was endeavouring to negotiate an alliance between the Haps­burgs and Bourbons, Ferdinand seized the opportunity to conclude the treaty of Aranjuez, which guaranteed the neutrality of the Italian provinces of the two families. On the outbreak of the Seven Years’ War in 1756 great efforts were made to draw Spain into the struggle. France offered Minorca, which had been lost by Byng at the first outbreak of hostilities, and England hastened to make the counter-proposition of a cession of Gibraltar. Ferdinand, however, refused both bribes, and maintained his policy of peace till his death in 1759.

This event gave the Spanish crown to Charles III., who had ruled the Two Sicilies since 1735. His accession threatened a speedy reversal of Spanish policy. The new king was a true Bourbon, and naturally inclined to the French alliance. He had an old grudge against England for the treatment he had received in the War of the Austrian Succession. He also owed a debt of gratitude to Maria Theresa for enabling him to transfer the crown of Naples to his third son, whereas by the treaty of Aix- la-Chapelle it ought to have passed to his brother, Philip of Parma. In spite of these motives, he hesitated for two years to take a decisive step. Spain was not pre­pared for war, and Charles had never cordially approved the change of policy at Versailles which had united France with its old rival Austria. But the rapid successes of England under Pitt’s administration, and the danger of a vast extension of the maritime and colonial ascendency of that country, soon overcame his scruples. In 1761 the third Family Compact was concluded, and Spain under­took to give active assistance to France unless peace were concluded within a year. Pitt, suspecting the existence

of this agreement, proposed an immediate declaration of war against Spain, but he failed to convince his cabinet and resigned. His successors, however, were driven to adopt his policy, and in January 1762 hostilities com­menced between the two countries. But Spain only entered the war to share the disasters which France had already begun to suffer. An invasion of Portugal, which had been regarded as a defenceless prey, was foiled by English assistance, and the English fleet captured Mar­tinique and Havana. The Bourbon powers found it neces­sary to implore peace, and it was fortunate for them that the English government had passed into the hands of Bute, who was eager to diminish the influence of Pitt by terminating the war. By the treaty of Paris (February 1763) England recovered Minorca, extended its colonies in every direction at the expense of France, and rejected all the demands which Charles III. had advanced on behalf of Spain.

In spite of the treaty Charles III.’s foreign policy continued to be guided by jealousy of England, and he clung to the French alliance as the only means by which he could avenge his recent humiliation. In this he was encouraged by his foreign minister, Grimaldi, who was so devoted to France that Choiseul declared himself to be more powerful at Madrid than at Versailles. In 1770 a dispute about the Falkland Islands, from which the English settlers had been expelled by a Spanish force, would probably have led to a renewal of war if a domestic intrigue had not succeeded at this juncture in overthrow­ing Choiseul. For the next few years a marked coolness grew up between France and Spain, which was increased when Louis XVI. disappointed the hopes that had been formed of his accession and left Choiseul in retirement. Grimaldi, chagrined at the failure of an alliance on which all his schemes were based, resigned office in 1777 and was succeeded by Count Florida Blanca, one of the most distinguished of the able ministers who ruled Spain during this period. The change of ministers made no difference to the policy of Charles III., whose obstinacy was in no way inferior to that of his predecessors. For many years Spain and Portugal had been engaged in disputes about the frontiers of their territories in South America, disputes which were rendered more bitter by the arrogance of Pombal, the Portuguese minister. The death of Joseph I. in 1777 and the consequent dismissal of Pombal enabled Florida Blanca to negotiate the treaty of San Ildefonso, by which Sacramento and the navigation of the Rio de la Plata were ceded to Spain, and a definite boundary was drawn between Brazil and Paraguay on the one side and Peru on the other. This was followed in March 1778 by the conclusion of a perpetual alliance at the Pardo, by which Portugal was attached to the interests of the Bourbon states. These treaties, which Florida Blanca regarded as among the most signal successes of his ministry, came very opportunely to enable Charles III. to resume the schemes that had lain in abeyance since 1763. England was involved in a desperate struggle with the revolted colonies of North America, and this offered the Bourbons the long-desired opportunity for revenge. In 1778 France entered into close alliance with the colonists, and in the next year Spain followed her example. Every­thing seemed to favour the allies. The Northern powers, irritated by the high-handed way in which England had asserted and exercised her maritime supremacy, formed the “ armed neutrality ” under the lead of Catherine II. of Russia. Even Holland, the oldest and most constant ally of England, was involved in the general coalition. England, which had failed single-handed to coerce its own subjects, was now face to face with the whole maritime power of Europe, and was also hampered by domestic and