PEACE

BETWEEN THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AND

GREAT BRITAIN.

CHAPTER I.

EUROPE AND AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

1778.

THE alliance of France with the United States brought the American question into the heart of Europe, where it called new political aspirations into activity, waked the hope of free trade between all the continents, and arraigned the British ministry at the judgment-seat of the civilized world. England could recover influence in the direction of external affairs only by a peace with her colonies. American independence was to be decided, not by arms alone, but equally by the policy and the sympathies of foreign princes and nations.

Both the great belligerents were involved in contradictions at home. The government of England, in seeking to suppress in her dependencies English rights by English arms, made war on the life of her

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own life. Inasmuch as the party of freedom and justice, which is, indeed, one for all mankind, was at least seen to be one and the same for the whole English race, it appeared more and more clearly that the total subjugation of America would be the prelude to the repression of liberty in the British isles.

In point of commercial wealth, industry, and adventurous enterprise, England at the time had no equal; in pride of nationality, no rival but France: yet her movements were marked by languor. There was no man in the cabinet who could speak words of power to call out her moral resources, and harmonize the various branches of the public service. The country, which in the seven years' war had been wrought by the elder Pitt to deeds of magnanimity, found in the ministry no representative. Public spirit had been quelled, and a disposition fostered to value personal interest above the general good. Even impending foreign war could not hush the turbulence of partisans. The administration, having no guiding principle, held its majority in the house of commons only on sufferance, its own officials only by its control of patronage. Insubordination showed itself in the fleet and in the army, and most among the officers. England had not known so bad a government since the reign of James the Second. It was neither beloved nor respected, and truly stood neither for the people nor for any party of the aristocracy; neither for the spirit of the time, nor for the past age, nor for that which was coming. It was a conglomerate of inferior and heterogeneous materials, totally unfit to guide the policy of a mighty empire, endured only during an interim.

The period in British history was one of great and increasing intellectual vigor. It was distinguished in philosophy by Hume and Reid and Price and Adam Smith; in painting by Reynolds; in poetry and various learning by Gray and Goldsmith, Johnson and Cowper; in legislative eloquence by Chatham, Burke, and Fox; in history by Gibbon; in the useful arts by Brindley, Watt, and Arkwright. That the nation, in a state of high and advancing culture, should have been governed by a sordid ministry, so inferior to itself as that of Lord North, was not due to the corruption of parliament alone; for there was always in the house of commons an independent fraction, disposed to give its votes with judicial fairness. It cannot be fully explained without considering the chaotic state of political parties. 1778.

The conflict between England and her American colonies sprang necessarily out of the development of British institutions. The supreme right of parliament as the representative of English nationality, and bound to resist and overthrow the personal government of the Stuarts, was the watchword of the revolution of 1688, which had been dear to America as the death-blow to monarchical absolutism throughout the English dominions, and as the harbinger of constitutional liberty for the civilized world. Parliament again asserted its paramount authority over the crown, when by its own enactment it transferred the succession to the house of Hanover. These revolutions could not have been achieved except through a categorical principle that would endure no questioning of its rightfulness. Such a principle could not submit to modifications, until it had accomplished its work;

CHAP. I. 1778. and, as it was imbedded with the love of liberty in the mass of the English nation, it had moved and acted with the strength and majesty of a national conviction.

In the process of years the assertion of the supreme power of parliament swiftly assumed an exaggerated form, and was claimed to extend, without limit, over Ireland and over the colonies; so that the theory which had first been used to rescue and secure the liberties of England became an instrument of despotism. Meantime both branches of parliament were but representatives of the same favored class; and the kings awakened no counterpoising sentiment of loyalty so long as the house of Hanover, the creature of parliament, was represented by princes of foreign birth, ignorant of the laws and the language of the land.

In this manner the government was conducted for a half century by the aristocracy, which, keeping in memory the days of Cromwell and of James the Second, were led into the persuasion that the party of liberty, to use the words of Rockingham, was that which "fought up against the king and against the people."

But by the side of the theory of absolute power concentred in parliament, which had twice been the sheet-anchor of the English constitution, there existed the older respect for the rights of the individual, and the liberties of organized communities. These two elements of British political life were brought into collision by the American revolution, which had its provocation in the theory of the omnipotence of parliament, and its justification in the eyes of English-

men in the principle of vital liberty diffused through all the parts of the commonwealth. The two ideas struggled for the ascendency in the mind of the British nation and in its legislature. They both are so embalmed in the undying eloquence of Burke, as to have led to the most opposite estimates of his political character. They both appear in startling distinctness in the speeches and conduct of Fox, who put all at hazard on the omnipotence of parliament, and yet excelled in the clear statement of the attitude of America. Both lay in irreconciled confusion in the politics of Rockingham, whose administration signalized itself by enacting the right of the king, lords, and commons of Britain to bind America in all cases whatsoever, and humanely refused to enforce the claim. The aristocratic party of liberty, organized on the principle of the absolute power of parliament, in order to defeat effectually, and for all time, the designs of the king against parliamentary usages and rights, had done its work and outlived its usefulness. In opposition to the continued rule of an aristocratic connection with the device of omnipotence over king and people, there rose up around the pure and venerable form of Chatham a new liberal party, willing to use the prerogative of the king to moderate the rule of the aristocracy in favor of the people.

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The new party aimed at a double modification of the unrestricted sovereignty of parliament. The elder Pitt ever insisted, and his friends continued to maintain, that the commons of Great Britain had no right to impose taxes on unrepresented colonies. This was the first step in the renovation of English liberty. The next was, to recognise that parliament

CHAP. I. 1778. as then composed did not adequately represent the nation; and statesmen of the connection of Rockingham desperately resisted both these cardinal principles of reform. This unyielding division among the opponents of Lord North prolonged his administration.

Besides, many men of honest intentions, neither wishing to see English liberties impaired, nor yet to consent to the independence of the colonies, kept their minds in a state of suspense; and this reluctance to decide led them to bear a little longer the ministry which alone professed ability to suppress the insurrection: for better men would not consent to take their places coupled with the condition of continuing their policy. Once in a moment of petulance Lord George Germain resigned; and the king, who wished to be rid of him, regarded his defection as a most favorable event.[1] But he was from necessity continued in his office, because no one else could be found willing to accept it.

In the great kingdom on the other side of the channel, antagonistic forces were likewise in action. As the representative of popular power, France had in reserve one great advantage over England in her numerous independent peasantry. Brought up in ignorance and seclusion, they knew not how to question anything that was taught by the church or commanded by the monarch; and, however they might for the present suffer from grievous and unredressed oppression, they constituted the safeguard of order as well as of nationality.

It was in the capital and among the cultivated classes of society, in coffee-houses and saloons, that

[1] King to Lord North, 3 March, 1778.

the cry rose for reform or revolution. The French king was absolute; yet the teachings of Montesquieu and the example of England raised in men of generous natures an uncontrollable desire for free institutions; while speculative fault-finders, knowing nothing of the self-restraint which is taught by responsibility in the exercise of office, indulged in ideal anticipations, which were colored by an exasperating remembrance of griefs and wrongs. France was the eldest daughter of the Roman church, with a king who was a sincere though not a bigoted Roman Catholic: and the philosophers carried their impassioned war against the church to the utmost verge of skepticism and unbelief; while a suspicion that forms of religion were used as a mere instrument of government began to find its way into the minds of the discontented laboring classes in the cities. But, apart from all inferior influences, the power of generalization, in which the French nation excels all others, imparts from time to time an idealistic character to its policy. The Parisians felt the reverses of the Americans as if they had been their own; and in November, 1776, an approaching rupture with England was the subject of all conversations.[1]

The American struggle was avowedly a war in defence of the common rights of mankind. The Prince de Montbarey, who owed his place as minister of war to the favor of Maurepas and female influence, and who cherished the prejudices of his order without being aware of his own mediocrity, professed to despise the people of the United States as formed from emigrants for the most part without character

[1] Goltz to Frederic, 14 Nov., 1776.

CHAP. I. 1778. and without fortune, ambitious and fanatical, and likely to attract to their support "all the rogues and the worthless from the four parts of the globe."[1] He had warned Lafayette against leaving his wife and wasting his fortune to play the part of Don Quixote in their behalf; and had raised in the council his feeble voice against the alliance of France with the insurgents. He regarded a victory over England as of no advantage commensurate with the dangerous example of sustaining a revolt against established authority. Besides, war would accumulate disorder in the public finances, retard useful works for the happiness of France, and justify reprisals by Great Britain on the colonies of the Bourbon princes.

It was against the interior sentiment of the king,[2] the doubts of Maurepas, and the vivid remonstrances of the minister of war, that the lingering influence of the policy of the balance of power, the mercantile aspirations of France, its spirit of philosophic freedom, its traditional antagonism to England as aiming at the universal monarchy of commerce and the seas, quickened by an eagerness to forestall a seemingly imminent reconciliation[3] with the colonies, forced the French alliance with America.

Just thirty-eight years before, when Maurepas was in the vigor of manhood, he had been famed for his aversion to England, and for founding his glory on the restoration of the French navy.[4] In the administration of Cardinal Fleury, he was thought to have had the mind of the widest range; and it was in those

[1] Mémoires Autographes de Montbarey, ii. 260, 262, 293–5, 309.

[2] Ibid., 210.

[3] Goltz to Frederic, 1 Jan., 1778.

[4] Droysen, Friedrich der Grosse, i. 106, note 2.

days predicted of him, that he would lead France to accomplish great results, if he should ever become the director of the government.[1] At length he was raised to be first minister by a king who looked up to him with simple-minded deference and implicit trust. The tenor of his mind was unchanged; but he was so enfeebled by long exclusion from public affairs and the heavy burden of years and infirmities, that no daring design could lure him from the love of quiet. By habit he put aside all business which admitted of delay, and shunned every effort of heroic enterprise. When the question of the alliance with America became urgent, he shrunk from proposing new taxes, which the lately restored parliaments might refuse to register; and he gladly accepted the guarantee of Necker, that all war expenditures could be met by the use of credit, varied financial operations, and reforms. It was only after the assurance of a sufficient supply of money from loans, of which the repayment would not disturb the remnant of his life, that he no longer attempted to stem the prevailing opinion of Paris in favor of America. The same fondness for ease, after hostilities were begun, led him to protect Necker from the many enemies who, from hatred of his reforms, joined the clamor against him as a foreigner and a Calvinist.

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The strength of the cabinet lay in Vergennes, whose superior statesmanship was yet not in itself sufficient to raise him above the care of maintaining himself in favor. He secured the unfailing good-will of his sovereign by his political principles, recognising no authority of either clergy, or nobility, or third

[1] Droysen, Friedrich der Grosse, i. 106, note 1.

CHAP. I. 1778. estate, but only a monarch to give the word, and all, as one people, to obey. Nor did he ever for a moment forget the respect due to Maurepas as his superior, so that he never excited a jealousy of rivalship. He had no prejudice about calling republics into being, whether in Europe or beyond the Atlantic, if the welfare of France seemed to require it; he had, however, in his earliest approaches to the insurgent colonies, acted in conjunction with Spain, which he continued to believe would follow France into the war with England; and in his eyes the interests of that branch of the house of Bourbon took precedence over those of the United States, except where the latter were precisely guaranteed by treaty.

Not one of the chiefs of the executive government, not even the director-general of the finances, was primarily a hearty friend to the new republic: the opinion of Necker was in favor of neutrality, and his liberalism, though he was a Swiss by birth, and valued the praises of the philosophic world, did not go beyond admiration of the political institutions of England.

The statesmen of the nation had not yet deduced from experience and the intuitions of reason a system of civil liberty to supersede worn-out traditional forms; and the lighter literature of the hour, skeptical rather than hopeful, mocked at the contradiction between institutions and rights. "Gentlemen of America," wrote Parny, at Paris, just before the alliance between France and the United States, "what right have you, more than we, to this cherished liberty? Inexorable tyranny crushes Europe; and you, lawless and mutinous people, without kings and without queens, will you dance to the clank of the chains which weigh

down the human race? And, deranging the beautiful equipoise, will you beard the whole world, and be free?"[1] Mirabeau wrote a fiery invective against despotism from a prison, of which his passionate imploring for leave to serve in America could not open the doors. CHAP. I. 1778.

Until chastened by affliction, Marie Antoinette wanted earnestness of character, and suffered herself to be swayed by generous caprices, or family ties, or the selfish solicitations of her female companions. She had an ascendency over the mind of the king, but never aspired to control his foreign policy, except in relation to Austria; and she could not always conceal her contempt for his understanding. It was only in the pursuit of offices and benefits for her friends that she would suffer no denial. She did not spare words of angry petulance to a minister who dared to thwart her requests; and Necker retained her favor by never refusing them. To find an embassy for the aged, inexperienced, and incompetent father-in-law[2] of the woman whom she appeared to love the most, she did not scruple to derange the diplomatic service of the kingdom. For the moment her emotions ran with the prevailing enthusiasm for the new republic; but they were only superficial and occasional, and could form no support for a steady conduct of the war.

It was the age of personal government in France. Its navy, its army, its credit, its administration, rested absolutely in the hands of a young man of four-and-twenty, whom his Austrian brother-in-law described

[1] Épitre aux Insurgents. Œuvres de Parny, ed. 1862, 343.

[2] Goltz to Frederic, 9 October, 1777.

CHAP. I. 1778. as a child. He felt for the Americans neither as insurgents against wrongs nor as a self-governing people; and never understood how it came about that, contrary to his own faith in unlimited monarchical power and in the Catholic church, his kingdom had plunged into a war to introduce to the potentates of the civilized world a revolutionary Protestant republic.

France was rich in resources; but its finances had not recovered from their exhaustion in the seven years' war. Their restoration became hopeless, when Necker promised to employ the fame of his severer administration only to add new weight to debts which were already escaping beyond control. The king of Prussia, whose poverty made him a sharp observer of the revenues of wealthier powers, repeatedly foretold the bankruptcy of the royal treasury, if the young king should break the peace.

All this while Paris was the centre of the gay society and intelligence of Europe. The best artists of the day, the masters of the rival schools of music, crowded round the court. The splendor of the Bourbon monarchy was kept up at the Tuileries and Versailles with prodigal magnificence; and invention was ever devising new methods of refined social enjoyment. The queen was happy in the dazzling scenes of which she was the life; the king pleased with the supreme power which he held it his right to exercise. To France, the years which followed are the most glorious in her history; for they were those in which she most consistently and disinterestedly fought for the liberties of mankind, and so prepared the way for her own regeneration,

and the overthrow of feudalism throughout Europe: but Louis the Sixteenth and Marie Antoinette, when they embarked for the liberation of America, pleasure on the prow, and the uncertain hand of youth at the helm, might have cried out to the young republic which they fostered: "Morituri te salutant," "The doomed to die salute thee."

The Catholic king might love to avenge himself on England by worrying her with chicanes and weakening her by promoting dissensions in her dominions; but he had learned from experience to recoil from war, and longed for tranquillity in his old age. A very costly and most unsuccessful expedition against Algiers, and a protracted strife with Portugal respecting the extension of Brazil to the La Plata, where Pombal by active forethought long counterbalanced superior power, had wasted the resources of his world-wide monarchy. Its revenue amounted to not much more than twenty millions of dollars, and a large annual deficit rapidly increased the public debt. Every consideration of sound policy enjoined upon the ruler of Spain to husband for his land the blessings of peaceful times; and, above all, as the great possessor of colonies, to avoid a war which was leading to the complete and irretrievable ruin of the old colonial system.

The management of its foreign dependencies — colonies they could not properly be called, nor could Spain be named their mother country — was to that kingdom an object of anxiety and never-sleeping suspicion, heightened by a perpetual consciousness that the task of governing them was beyond its ability. The total number of their inhabitants greatly

CHAP. I. 1778. exceeded its own. By their very extent, embracing, at least in theory, all the Pacific coast of America; and north of the Gulf of Mexico the land eastward to the Mississippi, or even to the Alleghanies, it could have no feeling of their subordination. The remoteness of the provinces on the Pacific still more weakened the tie of supremacy, which was nowhere confirmed by a common language, inherited traditions, or affinities of race. There was no bond of patriotism, or sense of the joint possession of political rights, or inbred loyalty. The connection between rulers and ruled was one of force alone; and the force was in itself so very weak that it availed only from the dull sluggishness of the governed. Distrust marked the policy of the home government, even toward those of its officials who were natives of Spain; still more toward the Creoles, as the offspring of Spaniards in America were called. No attempt had been made to bind the mind of the old races, except through the Roman religion, which was introduced by the sword and maintained by methods of superstition. There was, perhaps, never a time when the war-cry of the semi-barbarous nations who formed the bulk of the population was not heard somewhere on their border. The restraints on commerce were mischievous and vexatious, prompted by fear, and provoking murmurs and frauds.

Moreover, all the world was becoming impatient that so large a portion of the globe should be monopolized by an incapable and decrepit dynasty. The Dutch and the British and the French sought opportunities of illicit trade. The British cut down forest-trees, useful in the workshop and the dye-house, and

carried them off as unappropriated products of nature. The Russian flag waved on the American shore of the North Pacific.

To all these dangers from abroad, Charles the Third had added another, by making war on the so-called company of Jesus. Of the prelates of Spain, seven archbishops and twenty-eight bishops, two-thirds of them all, not only approved the exile of the order from his dominions, but recommended its total dissolution; while only one bishop desired to preserve it without reform. With their concurrence, and the support of France and Portugal, he finally extorted the assent of the pope to its abolition. But before the formal act of the see of Rome, on the second of April, 1767, at one and the same hour in Spain, in the north and south of Africa, in Asia, in America, in all the islands of the monarchy, the royal decree was opened by officials of the crown, enjoining them immediately to take possession of its houses, to chase its members from their convents, and within twenty-four hours to transport them as prisoners to some appointed harbor. These commands were followed with precision in Spain, where the Jesuit priests, without regard to their birth, education, or age, were sent on board ships to land where they could. They were executed less perfectly in Mexico and California, and still less so along the South Pacific coast and the waters of the La Plata.

But the power of Spain in her colonies had been promoted by the unwearied activity of the Jesuits. Their banishment weakened her authority over Spanish emigrants, and still more confused the minds of the rude progeny of the aborigines. In Paraguay,

CHAP. I. 1778. where Spanish supremacy had rested on Jesuits alone, who had held in their hands all the attributes of Cæsar and pope, of state and church, the revolution which divided these powers between a civil chief and Dominicans, Franciscans, and monks of the Lady of Mercy, made a fracture that never could be healed. It was as colonial insurgents that Spain dreaded the Americans, not as a new Protestant power. The antipathy of the king to the United States arose from political motives: by the recognition of their independence, he was threatened with a new, unexpected, and very real danger in all his boundless viceroyalties. There could be no fear of a popular rising in any of them to avenge a breach of political privileges; but as they had been won by adventurous leaders, so a priest, an aboriginal chief, a descendant of an Inca, might waken a common feeling in the native population, and defy the Spanish monarch. Jesuits might find shelter among their neophytes, and reappear as the guides of rebellion. One of their fathers has written: "When Spain tore evangelical laborers away from the colonies, the breath of independence agitated the New World, and God permitted it to detach itself from the Old."[1]

The example of the United States did not merely threaten to disturb the valley of the Mississippi; but, as epidemic disease leaps mysteriously over mountains and crosses oceans, spores of discontent might be unaccountably borne, to germinate among the many-tongued peoples of South America. All alluring promises of lowering the strength of England

[1] Charles III. et les Jésuites de ses états d'Europe et d'Amérique en 1767. Documents inédits, publiés par le p. Auguste Carayon de la compagnie de Jésus, lxxxvi. et lxxxvii.

could soothe Florida Blanca no more. His well- CHAP. I.
grounded sensitiveness was inflamed, till it became
a continual state of morbid irritability; and, from 1778.
the time when the court of France resolved to treat with the Americans, his prophetic fears could never for a moment be lulled to rest.

Portugal, which in the seven years' war, with the aid of England, escaped absorption by Spain, seemed necessarily about to become an ally of the British king. Its harbors, during the last year of the ministry of Pombal, were shut against the vessels of the United States; and congress, on the thirtieth of 1776. Dec. 30.
December, 1776, resenting the insult, was willing to incur its enmity, as the price of the active friendship of Spain.[1] But when, two months later, on the 1777. Feb. 24.
twenty-fourth of February, 1777, the weak-minded, superstitious Maria the First succeeded to the throne, Pombal retired before reactionary imbecility. Portugal, in exchange for a tract of land conterminous to Brazil, withdrew from the La Plata, and was scarcely heard of again during the war.

In the south-east of Europe, the chief political 1778.
interest for the United States centred in the joint rulers of the Austrian empire. The Danube, first of rivers of the old world, rolled through their dominions between valleys of exuberant fertility towards the great inland sea which drains a larger surface of Europe than the Mediterranean. Yet the culture and commerce of the eastern lands of the crown, by which alone their house could become great, were set aside as secondary objects, so that the mighty stream flowed almost in silence towards the Euxine.

[1] Secret Journals of Congress, ii. 40–44.

CHAP. I. 1778. In August, 1755, when Kaunitz was about to take in his hand the helm of the Austrian empire, and hold it for a third of a century, his first words in explanation of his policy were: "Prussia must be utterly thrown down from its very foundations, if the house of Austria is to stand upright."[1] In the year in which the United States declared their independence, as Joseph the Second visited France to draw closer his relations with that power, Kaunitz thus counselled the young emperor: "Move against Prussia with all moderation and regard for good appearances. Never fully trust its court. Direct against it the sum total of political strength, and let our whole system of state rest on this principle."[2]

Successive popes of Rome had wished an alliance of the two great Catholic powers of central Europe against the smaller states, by which the reformation had been rescued; and it was the chief boast of Kaunitz that he had effected that alliance. Twenty years after it was framed, his language was still: "Austria and Bourbon are natural allies, and have to regard the Protestant powers as their common rivals and enemies."[3]

Further; the Austrian court in the time of Kaunitz desired, above all, increased power and possessions in Germany, and planned the absorption of Bavaria. And as the dynastic interests of the imperial family claimed parity with those of the state, the same minister knew how to find thrones at

[1] Erläuterung zum Vortrag vom 28 Aug. 1755, in Archiv für Oesterreichische Geschichte, xlviii. 39. Herausgegeben von Adolf Beer.

[2] Politische Erinnerungen, &c. Ibid., 78.

[3] Ibid., 98.

Parma, at Paris, at Naples, for the three youngest of the six daughters of Maria Theresa. CHAP. I.

The arch-house looked upon itself as alone privileged to produce the chiefs of the holy Roman Empire, the continuers of Augustus, of Constantine, of Charlemagne, of Otho. In this idea lay its fiction of a claim to universal monarchy, sanctified by the church; so that any new acquisition could easily be regarded but as a recovery of a rightful part of its dominions. For the same reason it asserted precedence over every royal house, and would not own an equal, even in the empress of Russia. 1778.

Since Austria, deserting its old connection with England, had bound itself with France, and the two powers had faithfully fought together in the seven years' war, it would have seemed at least that the imperial court was bound to favor its Bourbon ally in the great contest for American independence. But we have seen an American agent rebuffed alike from the foreign office in Vienna and from the saloons of Kaunitz. The emperor, Joseph the Second, no less than his mother, from first to last condemned the rising of the American people as a wrong done to the principle of superior power; and his sympathy as a monarch was constant to England.

Such was the policy of the arch-house and its famous minister at this period of American history. But Prussia proved the depth and vigor of its roots by the manner of its wrestling with the storm; the Hapsburg alliance with Bourbon brought no advantage, and passed away, like everything else that is hollow and insincere. Bavaria still stands, clad in prouder honors than before. Of the thrones on which

CHAP. I. 1778. the Austrian princesses were placed, all three have crumbled; and their families are extinct or in exile. The fiction of the holy Roman Empire has passed away, and its meaningless shadow figures only in misplaced arms and devices.[1] The attitude of Austria to the United States will appear as our narrative proceeds. Kaunitz and the imperial house of his day sowed seed that had no life; and their policy bore no fruit, delaying for their generation the development of the great Austrian state.

In Italy, which by being broken into fragments was reft of its strength though not of its beauty, the United States had hoped to find support from the ruler of Florence, to whom they had commissioned an envoy: the world had been full of the praises of his code and of his government. But the hope was altogether vain. The south of Italy followed Spain. The pope took no thought of colonies which were soon to form a republic, with a people far more thoroughly Protestant than any nation in Europe. But the genius of the Italians has always revered the struggles of patriotism; and, while the Americans fought for their liberties, Filangieri was preparing the work, in which, with the applause of the best minds, he claimed for reason its rights in the governments of men. During the war, the king of Naples, as one of the Spanish Bourbons, conformed his commercial policy to that of Spain.

The Turkish empire affected the course of American affairs both during the war and at its close. The embroilment of the western maritime kingdoms seemed to leave its border provinces at the mercy

[1] Bryce's Holy Roman Empire, fourth ed., 367, 371.

of their neighbors, and there were statesmen in England who wished for peace, in order that their country might speak with authority on the Bosphorus and within the Euxine. CHAP. I. 1778.

Of the three northern powers, Russia was for the United States the most important; for Great Britain with ceaseless importunity sought its alliance: but its empress put aside every request to take an active part in the American contest, and repeatedly advised the restoration of peace by the concession of independence. Her heart was all in the Orient. She longed to establish a Christian empire on the Bosphorus, and wondered why Christians of the west should prefer to maintain Mussulmans at Constantinople. Of England, she loved and venerated the people; but she had contempt for its king and for his ministry, of which she noticed the many blunders and foretold the fall. On the other hand, she esteemed Vergennes as a wise and able minister, but did not love the French nation.[1]

In Gustavus the Third of Sweden, the nephew of Frederic of Prussia, France might expect a friend. The revolution of 1771, in favor of the royal prerogative, had been aided by French subsidies and the counsels of Vergennes, who was selected for the occasion to be the French minister at Stockholm. The oldest colonizers of the Delaware were Swedes, and a natural affection bound their descendants to the mother country. The adventurous king had the ambition to possess a colony, and France inclined to gratify his wish. His people, as builders and owners of ships,

[1] Compare Arneth's Maria Theresia und Joseph II., ihre Correspondenz, iii. 268.

CHAP. I. favored the largest interpretation of the maritime rights of neutrals; and we shall see their king, who 1778. had dashing courage, though not perseverance, now and then show himself as the boldest champion of the liberty of the seas.

Denmark, the remaining northern kingdom, was itself a colonial power, possessing small West India islands, and a foothold in the East. Its king, as Duke of Holstein, had a voice in the German Diet at Ratisbon. Its people were of a noble race; it is the land which, first of European states, forbade the slave-trade, and which, before the end of the century, abolished the remains of serfdom.

In 1778, a half-witted king, every day growing feebler in mind, yet in name preserving the functions of royalty; a crown prince of but ten years old, whose mother, divorced for adultery, had died in her youth an exile; a council of state, having the brother of the king for a member, and divided into two nearly equal factions; a queen-dowager, benevolent beyond her means, and fond of meddling in public affairs, — gave no promise of fixedness in the administration. Count Bernstorf, minister of foreign affairs, a Hanoverian by birth, professed to believe that the repose, the strength, and the happiness of civil society depend upon the principle, that a people can never be justified in renouncing fidelity, obedience, and subjection to its lawful government, and declaring itself independent. He watched, therefore, that the Danish government should not favor, or even seem to favor, any step which promised help to the Americans.[1] Complying with the suggestion of the Eng-

[1] Denkwürdigkeiten aus dem Leben des königlich dänischen Staats-

lish court, Danish subjects were forbidden to send, even to Danish West India islands, munitions of war, lest they should find their way to the United States.[1] The Danish and Norwegian ports were closed against prizes taken by American privateers. Yet, from its commercial interests, Denmark was forced to observe and to claim the rights of a neutral. CHAP. I. 1778.

Freedom has its favorite home on the mountains or by the sea. Of the two European republics of the last century, the one had established itself among the head-springs of the Rhine, the other at its mouth. America sheltered itself under the example of Switzerland, which rivalled in age the oldest monarchies, and, by its good order and industry, morals and laws, proved the stability of self-government, alike for the Romanic and for the Germanic race. Of the compatibility of extensive popular confederacies with modern civilization, Switzerland removed every doubt. Haldemand, a much-trusted brigadier in the British service, was by birth a Swiss; but England was never able to enlist his countrymen in the rank and file of her armies. The United States sought no direct assistance from Switzerland, but gratefully venerated their forerunner. Had their cause been lost, Alexander Hamilton would have retreated with his bride "to Geneva, where nature and society were in their greatest perfection."[2]

The deepest and the saddest interest hovers over the republic of the Netherlands, for the war between England and the United States prepared its grave.

ministers, Andreas Petrus Grafen von Bernstorf, von C. M. D. von Eggers, 93.

[1] Danish order of 4 Oct., 1775.

[2] Alexander Hamilton to Eliza Schuyler, MS.

CHAP. I. 1778. Of all the branches of the Germanic family, that nation which rescued from the choked and shallowed sea the unstable silt and sands brought down by the Rhine has endured the most and wrought the most in favor of liberty of conscience, liberty of commerce, and liberty in the state. The republic which it founded was the child of the reformation. For three generations the best interests of mankind were abandoned to its keeping; and, to uphold the highest objects of spiritual life, its merchants, landholders, and traders so teemed with heroes and martyrs, that they tired out brute force, and tyranny, and death itself, and from war educed life and hope for coming ages. Their existence was an unceasing struggle with the ocean which beat against their dykes; with the rivers which cut away their soil; with neighbors that coveted their territory; with England, their ungenerous rival in trade. In proportion to numbers, they were the first in agriculture and in commerce; first in establishing credit by punctuality and probity; first in seeing clearly that great material interests are fostered best by liberty. Their land remained the storehouse of renovating political ideas for Europe, and the asylum of all who were persecuted for their thoughts. In freedom of conscience they were the light of the world. Out of the heart of a taciturn, phlegmatic, serious people, inclined to solitude and reflection, rose the men who constructed the code of international law in the spirit of justice.

In 1674, after England for about a quarter of a century had aimed by acts of legislation and by wars to ruin the navigation of the Netherlands, the two powers consolidated peace by a treaty of commerce,

in which the rights of neutrals were guaranteed in language the most precise and the most intelligible. Not only was the principle recognised that free ships make free goods; but, both positively and negatively, ship-timber and other naval stores were excluded from the list of contraband. CHAP. I. 1778.

In 1688 England contracted to the Netherlands the highest debt that one nation can owe to another. Herself not knowing how to recover her liberties, they were restored by men of the United Provinces; and Locke brought back from his exile in that country the theory on government which had been formed by the Calvinists of the continent, and which made his chief political work the text-book of the friends of free institutions for a century.

During the long wars for the security of the new English dynasty, and for the Spanish succession, in all which the republic had little interest of its own, it remained the faithful ally of Great Britain. Gibraltar was taken by ships and troops of the Dutch not less than by those of England: yet its appropriation by the stronger state brought them no corresponding advantage; on the contrary, their exhausted finances and disproportionate public debt crippled their power of self-defence.

For these faithful, unexampled, and unrequited services the republic might, at least, expect to find in England a wall of protection. But during the seven years' war, in disregard of treaty obligations, its ships were seized on the ground that they had broken the arbitrary British rules of contraband and blockade. In the year 1758 the losses of its merchants on these pretences were estimated at more

CHAP. I. 1778.

than twelve million guilders. In 1762 four of its ships, convoyed by a frigate, were taken, after an engagement; and though the frigate was released, George Grenville, then secretary of state, announced by letter to its envoy that the right of stopping Dutch ships with naval stores must be and would be sustained.[1]

These violences began to wean the Dutch people from their attachment to England. Could the prizes, which her courts wrongfully condemned, compensate for the affections of an ally of a hundred years? But this was not the worst: she took advantage of the imperfections in the constitution of the Netherlands to divide their government, and by influence and corruption she won the party of the stadholder to her own uses.

The republic was in many ways dear to the United States. It had given a resting-place to their emigrant pilgrims, and dismissed them to the new world with lessons of religious toleration. It had planted the valley of the Hudson; and in New York and New Jersey its sons still cherished the language, church rule, and customs of their parent nation. The Dutch saw in the American struggle a repetition of their own history; and the Americans looked to them for the evidence that a small but resolute state can triumph over the utmost efforts of the mightiest and wealthiest empire.

[1] Stormont to Yorke, 11 January, 1780.