VARIOUS

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Содержание

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MARLBOROUGH. [1]

No. I

Alexander the Great said, when he approached the tomb of Achilles, "Oh! fortunate youth, who had a Homer to be the herald of your fame!" "And well did he say so," says the Roman historian: "for, unless the *Iliad* had been written, the same earth which covered his body would have buried his name." Never was the truth of these words more clearly evinced than in the case of the Duke of Marlborough. Consummate as were the abilities, unbroken the success, immense the services of this great commander, he can scarcely be said to be known to the vast majority of his countrymen. They have heard the distant echo of his fame as they have that of the exploits of Timour, of Bajazet, and of Genghis Khan; the names of Blenheim and Ramillies, of Malplaquet and Oudenarde, awaken a transient feeling of exultation in their bosoms; but as to the particulars of these events, the difficulties with which their general had to struggle, the objects for which he contended, even the places where they occurred, they are, for the most part, as ignorant as they are of similar details in the campaigns of Baber or Aurengzebe. What they do know, is derived chiefly, if not entirely, from the histories of their enemies. Marlborough's exploits have made a prodigious impression on the Continent. The French, who felt the edge of his flaming sword, and saw the glories of the *Grande Monarque* torn from the long triumphant brow of Louis XIV.; the Dutch, who found in his conquering arm the stay of their sinking republic, and their salvation from slavery and persecution; the Germans, who saw the flames of the Palatinate avenged by his resistless power, and the ravages of war rolled back from the Rhine into the territory of the state which had provoked them; the Lutherans, who beheld in him the appointed instrument of divine vengeance, to punish the abominable perfidy and cruelty of the revocation of the edict of Nantes – have concurred in celebrating his exploits. The French nurses frightened their children with stories of "Marlbrook," as the Orientals say, when their horses start, they see the shadow of Richard Cœur-de-Lion crossing their path. Napoleon hummed the well-known air, "Marlbrook s'en va à la guerre," when he crossed the Niemen to commence the Moscow campaign. But in England, the country which he has made illustrious, the nation he has saved, the land of his birth, he is comparatively forgotten; and were it not for the popular pages of Voltaire, and the shadow which a great name throws over the stream of time in spite of every neglect, he would bevirtually unknown at this moment to nineteen-twentieths of the British people.

It is the fault of the national historians which has occasioned this singular injustice to one of the greatest of British heroes – certainly the most consummate, if we except Wellington, of British military commanders. No man has yet appeared who has done any thing like justice to the exploits of Marlborough. Smollett, whose unpretending narrative, compiled for the bookseller, has obtained a passing popularity by being the only existing sequel to Hume, had none of the qualities necessary to write a military history, or make the narrative of heroic exploits interesting. His talents for humour, as all the world knows, were great – for private adventure, or the delineation of common life in

[1] *Letters and Despatches of John Churchill, First Duke of Marlborough, from 1702 to 1712.* Edited by Sir George Murray, G.C.B., Master-General of the Ordnance, &c. 3 vols. London, 1845.

novels, considerable. But he had none of the higher qualities necessary to form a great historian; he had neither dramatic nor descriptive power; he was entirely destitute of philosophic views or power of general argument. In the delineation of individual character, he is often happy; his talents as a novelist, and as the narrator of private events, there appear to advantage. But he was neither a poet nor a painter, a statesman nor a philosopher. He neither saw whence the stream of events had come, nor whither it was going. We look in vain in his pages for the lucid arguments and rhetorical power with which Hume illustrated, and brought, as it were, under the mind's eye, the general arguments urged, or rather which might be urged by ability equal to his own, for and against every great change in British history. As little do we find the captivating colours with which Robertson has painted the discovery and wonders of America, or the luminous glance which he has thrown over the progress of society in the first volume of Charles V. Gibbon's incomparable powers of classification and description are wholly awanting. The fire of Napier's military pictures need not be looked for. What is usually complained of in Smollett, especially by his young readers, is, that he is so dull – the most fatal of all defects, and the most inexcusable in an historian. His heart was not in history, his hand was not trained to it; it is in "Roderick Random" or "Peregrine Pickle," not the continuation of Hume, that his powers are to be seen.

Lord Mahon has brought to the subject of the history of England from the treaty of Utrecht to that of Aix-la-Chapelle, talents of a kind much better adapted for doing justice to Marlborough's campaigns. He has remarkable power for individual narrative. His account of the gallant attempt, and subsequent hair-breadth escapes of the Pretender in 1745, is full of interest, and is justly praised by Sismondi as by far the best account extant of that romantic adventure. He possesses also a fair and equitable judgment, much discrimination, evident talent for drawing characters, and that upright and honourable heart, which is the first requisite for success in the delineation, as it is for success in the conduct of events. His industry in examining and collecting authorities is great; he is a scholar, a statesman, and a gentleman – no small requisites for the just delineation of noble and generous achievements. But notwithstanding all this, his work is not the one to rescue Marlborough's fame from the unworthy obscurity into which, in this country, it has fallen. He takes up the thread of events where Marlborough left them: he begins only at the peace of Utrecht. Besides this, he is not by nature a military historian, and if he had begun at the Revolution, the case would probably have been the same. Lord Mahon's attention has been mainly fixed on domestic story; it is in illustrating parliamentary contests or court intrigues, not military events, that his powers have been put forth. He has given a clear, judicious, and elegant narrative of British history, as regards these, so far as it is embraced by his accomplished pen; but the historian of Marlborough must treat him as second to none, not even to Louis XIV. or William III. Justice will never be done to the hero of the English revolution, till his Life is the subject of a separate work in every schoolboy's hands. We must have a memoir of him to be the companion of Southey's Life of Nelson, and Napier's Peninsular War.

Voltaire, in his "Siècle de Louis XIV.," could not avoid giving a sketch of the exploits of the British hero; and his natural impartiality has led him, so far as it goes, to give a tolerably fair one. It need hardly be said, that coming from the pen of such a writer, it is lively, animated, and distinct. But Voltaire was not a military historian; he had none of the feelings or associations which constitute one. War, when he wrote, had been for above half a century, with a few brilliant exceptions, a losing game to the French. In the War of the Succession they had lost their ascendancy in continental Europe; in that of the Seven Years, nearly their whole colonial dominions. The hard-won glories of Fontenoy, the doubtful success of Laffelt, were a poor compensation for these disasters. It was the fashion of his day to decry war as the game of kings, or flowing from the ambition of priests; if superstition was abolished, and popular virtue let into government, one eternal reign of peace and justice would commence. With these writers the great object was, to carry the cabinets of kings by assault, and introduce philosophers into government through the antechambers of mistresses. Peter the Great was their hero, Catharine of Russia their divinity, for they placed philosophers at the head of affairs. It was

not to be supposed that in France, the vanquished country, in such an age justice should be done to the English conqueror. Yet such were the talents of Voltaire, especially for making a subject popular, that it is on his work, such as it is, that the fame of Marlborough mainly rests, even in his own country.

Marlborough, as might be expected, has not wanted biographers who have devoted themselves, expressly and exclusively, to transmit his fame and deeds to posterity. They have for the most part failed, from the faults most fatal, and yet most common to biographers – undue partiality in some, dulness and want of genius in others. They began at an early period after his death, and are distinguished at first by that rancour on the one side, and exaggeration on the other, by which such contemporary narratives are generally, and in that age were in a peculiar manner, distinguished. I. An abridged account of his life, dedicated to the Duke of Montague, his son-in-law, appeared at Amsterdam in 12mo; but it is nothing but an anonymous panegyric. II. Not many years after, a life of Marlborough was published, in three volumes quarto, by Thomas Ledyard, who had accompanied him in many of his later travels, and had been the spectator of some of the last of his military exploits. This is a work of much higher authority, and contains much valuable information; but it is prolix, long-winded, and diffuse, filled with immaterial documents, and written throughout in a tone of inflated panegyric. III. Another life of Marlborough, written with more ability, appeared at Paris in 1806, in three volumes octavo, by Dutems. The author had the advantage of all the resources for throwing light on his history which the archives of France, then at the disposal of Napoleon, who had a high admiration for the English general, could afford; but it could hardly be expected that, till national historians of adequate capacity for the task had appeared, it was to be properly discharged by foreigners. Yet such is the partiality which an author naturally contracts for the hero of his biography, that the work of Dutems, though the author has shown himself by no means blind to his hero's faults, is perhaps chiefly blameable for being too much of a panegyric. IV. By far the fullest and most complete history of Marlborough, however, is that which was published at London in 1818, by Archdeacon Coxe, in five volumes octavo. This learned author had access to all the official documents on the subject then known to be in existence, particularly the Blenheim Papers, and he has made good use of the ample materials placed at his disposal; but it cannot be said that he has made an interesting, though he certainly has a valuable, work. It has reached a second edition, but it is now little heard of: a certain proof, if the importance of his subject, and value of his materials is taken into account, that it labours under some insurmountable defects in composition. Nor is it difficult to see what these defects are. The venerable Archdeacon, respectable for his industry, his learning, his researches, had not a ray of genius, and genius is the soul of history. He gives every thing with equal minuteness, makes no attempt at digesting or compression, and fills his pages with letters and state-papers at full length; the certain way, if not connected by ability, to send them to the bottom.

Dean Swift's history of the four last years of Queen Anne, and his Apology for the same sovereign, contain much valuable information concerning Marlborough's life; but it is so mixed up with the gall and party spirit which formed so essential a part of the Dean of St Patrick's character, that it cannot be relied on as impartial or authentic.[2] The life of James II. by Clarke contains a great variety of valuable and curious details drawn from the Stuart Papers sent to the Prince Regent on the demise of the Cardinal York; and it would be well for the reputation of Marlborough, as well as many other eminent men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, if some of them could be buried in oblivion. But by far the best life of Marlborough, in a military point of view, is that recently published by Mr Gleig, in his "Military Commanders of Great Britain," – a sketch characterized by all the scientific knowledge, practical acquaintance with war, and brilliant power of description, by which the other writings of that gifted author are distinguished. If he would make as good use of

[2] "Marlborough," says Swift, "is as voracious as hell, and as ambitious as the devil. What he desires above every thing is to be made commander-in-chief for life, and it is to satisfy his ambition and his avarice that he has opposed so many intrigues to the efforts made for the restoration of peace."

the vast collection of papers which, under the able auspices of Sir George Murray, have now issued from the press, as he has of the more scanty materials at his disposal when he wrote his account of Marlborough, he would write *the* history of that hero, and supersede the wish even for any other.

The fortunate accident is generally known by which the great collection of papers now in course of publication in London has been brought to light. That this collection should at length have become known is less surprising than that it should so long have remained forgotten, and have eluded the searches of so many persons interested in the subject. It embraces, as Sir George Murray's lucid preface mentions, a complete series of the correspondence of the great duke from 1702 to 1712, the ten years of his most important public services. In addition to the despatches of the duke himself, the letters, almost equally numerous, of his private secretary, M. Cardonnell, and a journal written by his grace's chaplain, Dr Hare, afterwards Bishop of Chichester, are contained in the eighteen manuscript volumes which were discovered in the record-room of Hensington, near Woodstock, in October 1842, and are now given to the public. They are of essential service, especially in rendering intelligible the details of the correspondence, which would otherwise in great part be uninteresting, and scarce understood, at least by the ordinary reader. Some of the most valuable parts of the work, particularly a full detail of the battle of Blenheim, are drawn from Dr Hare's journal. In addition to this, the bulletins of most of the events, issued by government at the time, are to be found in notes at the proper places; and in the text are occasionally contained short, but correct and luminous notices, of the preceding or contemporaneous political and military events which are alluded to, but not described, in the despatches, and which are necessary to understand many of their particulars. Nothing, in a word, has been omitted by the accomplished editor which could illustrate or render intelligible the valuable collection of materials placed at his disposal; and yet, with all his pains and ability, it is often very difficult to follow the detail of events, or understand the matter alluded to in the despatches: – so great is the lack of information on the eventful War of the Succession which prevails, from the want of a popular historian to record it, even among well-informed persons in this country; and so true was the observation of Alexander the Great, that but for the genius of Homer, the exploits of Achilles would have been buried under the tumulus which covered his remains! And what should we have known of Alexander himself more than of Attila or Genghis Khan, but for the fascinating pages of Quintus Curtius and Arrian?

To the historian who is to go minutely into the details of Marlborough's campaigns and negotiations, and to whom accurate and authentic information is of inestimable importance, it need hardly be said that these papers are of the utmost value. But, to the general reader, all such voluminous publications and despatches must, as a matter of necessity, be comparatively uninteresting. They always contain a great deal of repetition, in consequence of the necessity under which the commander lay, of communicating the same event to those with whom he was in correspondence in many different quarters. Great part of them relate to details of discipline, furnishing supplies, getting up stores, and other necessary matters, of little value even to the historian, except in so far as they illustrate the industry, energy, and difficulties of the commander. The general reader who plunges into the midst of the Marlborough despatches in this age, or into those of Wellington in the next, when contemporary recollection is lost, will find it impossible to understand the greater part of the matters referred to, and will soon lay aside the volumes in despair. Such works are highly valuable, but they are so to the annalist or historian rather than the ordinary reader. They are the materials of history, not history itself. They bear the same relation to the works of Livy or Gibbon which the rude blocks in the quarry do to the temples of St Peter's or the Parthenon. Ordinary readers are not aware of this when they take up a volume of despatches; they expect to be as much fascinated by it as they are by the correspondence of Madame de Sevigné, Cowper, Gibbon, or Arnold. They will soon find their mistake: the book-sellers will erelong find it in the sale of such works. The matter-of-fact men in ordinary life, and the compilers and drudges in literature – that is, nine-tenths of the readers and writers in the world – are never weary of descanting on the inestimable importance of authentic

documents for history; and without doubt they are right so far as the collecting of materials goes. There must be quarriers before there can be architects: the hewers of wood and drawers of water are the basis of all civilization. But they are not civilization itself, they are its pioneers. Truth is essential to an estimable character: but many a man is insupportably dull who never told a falsehood. The pioneers of Marlborough, however, have now gone before, and it will be the fault of English genius if the divine artist does not erelong make the proper use of the materials at length placed in his hands.

John Churchill, afterwards Duke of Marlborough, was born on the 5th July 1650, (new style,) at Ash, in the county of Devon. His father was Sir Winston Churchill, a gallant cavalier who had drawn his sword in behalf of Charles I., and had in consequence been deprived of his fortune and driven into exile by Cromwell. His paternal family was very ancient, and boasted its descent from the *Courcils* de Poitou, who came into England with the Conqueror. His mother was Elizabeth Drake, who claimed a collateral connexion with the descendants of the illustrious Sir Francis Drake, the great navigator. Young Churchill received the rudiments of his education from the parish clergyman in Devonshire, from whom he imbibed that firm attachment to the Protestant faith by which he was ever afterwards distinguished, and which determined his conduct in the most important crisis of his life. He was afterwards placed at the school of St Paul's; and it was there that he first discovered, on reading Vegetius, that his bent of mind was decidedly for the military life. Like many other men destined for future distinction, he made no great figure as a scholar, a circumstance easily explained, if we recollect that it is on the knowledge of words that the reputation of a schoolboy, of things that of a man, is founded. But the despatches now published demonstrate that, before he attained middle life, he was a proficient at least in Latin, French, and English composition; for letters in each, written in a very pure style, are to be found in all parts of his correspondence.

From early youth, young Churchill was distinguished by the elegance of his manners and the beauty of his countenance and figure – advantages which, coupled with the known loyal principles of his father, and the sufferings he had undergone in the royal cause, procured for him, at the early age of fifteen, the situation of page in the household of the Duke of York, afterwards James II. His inclination for arms was then so decided, that that prince procured for him a commission in one of the regiments of guards when he was only sixteen years old. His uncommonly handsome figure then attracted no small share of notice from the beauties of the court of Charles II., and even awakened a passion in one of the royal mistresses herself. Impatient to signalize himself, however, he left their seductions, and embarked as a volunteer in the expedition against Tangiers in 1766. Thus his first essay in arms was made in actions against the Moors. Having returned to Great Britain, he attracted the notice of the Countess of Castlemaine, afterwards Duchess of Cleveland, then the favorite mistress of Charles II., who had distinguished him by her regard before he embarked for Africa, and who made him a present of £5000, with which the young soldier bought an annuity of £500 a-year, which laid the foundation, says Chesterfield, of all his subsequent fortunes. Charles, to remove a dangerous rival in her unsteady affections, gave him a company in the guards, and sent him to the Continent with the auxiliary force which, in those days of English humiliation, the cabinet of St James's furnished to Louis XIV. to aid him in subduing the United Provinces. Thus, by a singular coincidence, it was under Turenne, Condé, and Vauban that the future conqueror of the Bourbons first learned the art of scientific warfare. Wellington went through the same discipline, but in the inverse order: his first campaigns were made against the French in Flanders, his next against the bastions of Tippoo and the Mahratta horse in Hindostan.

Churchill had not been long in Flanders, before his talents and gallantry won for him deserved distinction. The campaign of 1672, which brought the French armies to the gates of Amsterdam, and placed the United States within a hair's-breadth of destruction, was to him fruitful in valuable lessons. He distinguished himself afterwards so much at the siege of Nimeguen, that Turenne, who constantly called him by his *sobriquet* of "the handsome Englishman," predicted that he would one day be a great man. In the following year he had the good fortune to save the life of his colonel,

the Duke of Monmouth; and distinguished himself so much at the siege of Maestricht, that Louis XIV. publicly thanked him at the head of his army, and promised him his powerful influence with Charles II. for future promotion. He little thought what a formidable enemy he was then fostering at the court of his obsequious brother sovereign. The result of Louis XIV.'s intercession was, that Churchill was made lieutenant-colonel; and he continued to serve with the English auxiliary force in Flanders, under the French generals, till 1677, when he returned with his regiment to London. Beyond all doubt it was these five years' service under the great masters of the military art, who then sustained the power and cast a halo round the crown of Louis XIV., which rendered Marlborough the consummate commander that, from the moment he was placed at the head of the Allied armies, he showed himself to have become. One of the most interesting and instructive lessons to be learned from biography is the long steps, the vast amount of previous preparation, the numerous changes, some prosperous, others adverse, by which the mind of a great man is formed, and he is prepared for playing the important part he is intended to perform on the theatre of the world. Providence does nothing in vain, and when it has selected a particular mind for great achievement, the events which happen to it all seem to conspire in a mysterious way for its development. Were any one omitted, some essential quality in the character of the future hero, statesman, or philosopher would be found to be awanting.

Here also, as in every other period of history, we may see how unprincipled ambition overvaults itself, and the measures which seem at first sight most securely to establish its oppressive reign, are the unseen means by which an overruling power works out its destruction. Doubtless the other ministers of Louis XIV. deemed their master's power secure when this English alliance was concluded; when the English monarch had become a state pensioner of the court of Versailles; when a secret treaty had united them by apparently indissoluble bonds; when the ministers equally and the patriots of England were corrupted by his bribes; when the dreaded fleets of Britain were to be seen in union with those of France, to break down the squadrons of an inconsiderable republic; when the descendants of the conquerors of Cressy, Poitiers, and Azincour stood side by side with the successors of the vanquished in those disastrous fields, to achieve the conquest of Flanders and Holland. Without doubt, so far as human foresight could go, Louvois and Colbert were right. Nothing could appear so decidedly calculated to fix the power of Louis XIV. on an immovable foundation. But how vain are the calculations of the greatest human intellects, when put in opposition to the overruling will of Omnipotence! It was that very English alliance which ruined Louis XIV., as the Austrian alliance and marriage, which seemed to put the keystone in the arch of his greatness, afterwards ruined Napoleon. By the effect, and one of the most desired effects, of the English alliance, a strong body of British auxiliaries were sent to Flanders; the English officers learned the theory and practice of war in the best of all schools, and under the best of all teachers; that ignorance of the military art, the result in every age of our insular situation, and which generally causes the four or five first years of every war to terminate in disaster, was for the time removed, and that mighty genius was developed under the eye of Louis XIV., and by the example of Turenne, which was destined to hurl back to their own frontiers the tide of Gallic invasion, and close in mourning the reign of the *Grande Monarque*. "Les hommes agissent," says Bossuet, "mais Dieu les mène."

Upon Churchill's return to London, the brilliant reputation which had preceded, and the even augmented personal advantages which accompanied him, immediately rendered him the idol of beauty and fashion. The ladies of the palace vied for his homage – the nobles of the land hastened to cultivate his society. Like Julius Cæsar, he was carried away by the stream, and plunged into the vortex of courtly dissipation with the ardour which marks an energetic character in the pursuit whether of good or evil. The elegance of his person and manners, and charms of his conversation, prevailed so far with Charles II. and the Duke of York, that soon after, though not yet thirty years of age, he obtained a regiment. In 1680 he married the celebrated Sarah Jennings, the favourite lady in attendance on the Princess Anne, second daughter of the Duke of York, one of the most admired beauties of the court,

and this alliance increased his influence, already great, with that Prince, and laid the foundation of the future grandeur of his fortunes. Shortly after his marriage he accompanied the Duke of York to Scotland, in the course of which they both were nearly shipwrecked on the coast of Fife. On this occasion the Duke made the greatest efforts to preserve his favourite's life, and succeeded in doing so, although the danger was such that many of the Scottish nobles perished under his eye. On his return to London in 1682, he was presented by his patron to the King, who made him colonel of the third regiment of guards. When the Duke of York ascended the throne in 1685, on the demise of his brother, Churchill kept his place as one of the gentlemen of the bedchamber, and was raised to the rank of brigadier-general. He was sent by his sovereign to Paris to notify his accession to Louis XIV., and on his return he was created a peer by the title of Baron Churchill of Sandbridge in the county of Hertford – a title which he took from an estate there which he had acquired in right of his wife. On the revolt of the Duke of Monmouth, he had an opportunity of showing at once his military ability, and, by a signal service, his gratitude to his benefactor. Lord Feversham had the command of the royal forces, and Churchill was his major-general. The general-in-chief, however, kept so bad a look-out, that he was on the point of being surprised and cut to pieces by the rebel forces, who, on this occasion at least, were conducted with ability. The general and almost all his officers were in their beds, and sound asleep, when Monmouth, at the head of all his forces, silently debouched out of his camp, and suddenly fell on the royal army. The rout would have been complete, and probably James II. dethroned, had not Churchill, whose vigilant eye nothing escaped, observed the movement, and hastily collected a handful of men, with whom he made so vigorous a resistance as gave time for the remainder of the army to form, and repel this well-conceived enterprise.

Churchill's mind was too sagacious, and his knowledge of the feelings of the nation too extensive, not to be aware of the perilous nature of the course upon which James had adventured, in endeavouring to bring about, if not the absolute re-establishment of the Catholic religion, at least such a quasi-establishment of it as the people deemed, and probably with reason, was, with so aspiring a body of ecclesiastics, in effect the same thing. When he saw the headstrong monarch break through all bounds, and openly trample on the liberties, while he shocked the religious feelings, of his people, he wrote to him to point out, in firm but respectful terms, the danger of his conduct. He declared to Lord Galway, when James's innovations began, that if he persisted in his design of overturning the constitution and religion of his country, he would leave his service. So far his conduct was perfectly unexceptionable. Our first duty is to our country, our second only to our benefactor. If they are brought into collision, as they often are during the melancholy vicissitudes of a civil war, an honourable man, whatever it may cost him, has but one part to take. He must not abandon his public duty for his private feelings, but he must never betray official duty. If Churchill, perceiving the frantic course of his master, had withdrawn from his service, and then either taken no part in the revolution which followed, or even appeared in arms against him, the most scrupulous moralist could have discovered nothing reprehensible in his conduct. History has in every age applauded the virtue, while it has commiserated the anguish, of the elder Brutus, who sacrificed his sons to the perhaps too rigorous laws of his country.

But Churchill did not do this, and thence has arisen an ineffaceable blot on his memory. He did not relinquish the service of the infatuated monarch; he retained his office and commands; but he employed the influence and authority thence derived, to ruin his benefactor. So far were the representations of Churchill from having inspired any doubts of his fidelity, that James, when the Prince of Orange landed, confided to him the command of a corps of five thousand men, destined to oppose his progress. At the very time that he accepted that command, he had, if we may believe his panegyrist Ledyard, signed a letter, along with several other peers, addressed to the Prince of Orange, inviting him to come over, and had actually concluded with Major-General Kirk, who commanded at Axminster, a convention, for the seizure of the king and giving him up to his hostile son-in-law. James was secretly warned that Churchill was about to betray him, but he refused to believe it of one from

whom he had hitherto experienced such devotion, and was only wakened from his dream of security by learning that his favourite had gone over with the five thousand men whom he commanded to the Prince of Orange. Not content with this, it was Churchill's influence, joined to that of his wife, which is said to have induced James's own daughter, the Princess Anne, and Prince George of Denmark, to detach themselves from the cause of the falling monarch; and drew from that unhappy sovereign the mournful exclamation, "My God! my very children have forsaken me." In what does this conduct differ from that of Labedoyere, who, at the head of the garrison of Grenoble, deserted to Napoleon when sent out to oppose him? – or Lavalette, who employed his influence, as postmaster under Louis XVIII., to forward the Imperial conspiracy? – or Marshal Ney, who, after promising at the court of the Tuileries to bring the ex-emperor back in an iron cage, no sooner reached the royal camp at Melun, than he issued a proclamation calling on the troops to desert the Bourbons, and mount the tricolor cockade? Nay, is not Churchill's conduct, in a moral point of view, worse than that of Ney; for the latter abandoned the trust reposed in him by a new master, forced upon an unwilling nation, to rejoin his old benefactor and companion in arms; but the former abandoned the trust reposed in him by his old master and benefactor, to range himself under the banner of a competitor for the throne, to whom he was bound neither by duty nor obligation. And yet such is often the inequality of crimes and punishments in this world, that Churchill was raised to the pinnacle of greatness by the very conduct which consigned Ney, with justice, so far as his conduct is concerned, to an ignominious death.

> "Treason ne'er prospers; for when it does,
> None dare call it treason."

History forgets its first and noblest duty when it fails, by its distribution of praise and blame, to counterbalance, so far as its verdict can, this inequality, which, for inscrutable but doubtless wise purposes, Providence has permitted in this transient scene. Charity forbids us to scrutinize such conduct too severely. It is the deplorable effect of a successful revolution, even when commenced for the most necessary purposes, to obliterate the ideas of man on right and wrong, and leave no other test in the general case for public conduct but success. It is its first effect to place them in such trying circumstances that none but the most confirmed and resolute virtue can pass unscathed through the ordeal. He knew the human heart well, who commanded us in our daily prayers to supplicate not to be led into temptation, even before asking for deliverance from evil. Let no man be sure, however much, on a calm survey, he may condemn the conduct of Marlborough and Ney, that in similar circumstances he would not have done the same.

The magnitude of the service rendered by Churchill to the Prince of Orange, immediately appeared in the commands conferred upon him. Hardly was he settled at William's headquarters when he was dispatched to London to assume the command of the Horse Guards; and, while there, he signed, on the 20th December 1688, the famous Act of Association in favour of the Prince of Orange. Shortly after, he was named lieutenant-general of the armies of William, and immediately made a new organization of the troops, under officers whom he could trust, which proved of the utmost service to William on the unstable throne on which he was soon after seated. He was present at most of the long and momentous debates which took place in the House of Peers on the question on whom the crown should be conferred, and at first is said to have inclined to a regency; but with a commendable delicacy he absented himself on the night of the decisive vote on the vacancy of the throne. He voted, however, on the 6th of February for the resolution which settled the crown on William and Mary; and he assisted at their coronation, under the title of Earl of Marlborough, to which he had shortly before been elevated by William. England having, on the accession of the new monarch, joined the continental league against France, Marlborough received the command of the British auxiliary force in the Netherlands, and by his courage and ability contributed in a remarkable manner to the victory of Walcourt. In 1690 he received orders to return from Flanders in order to assume a command in

Ireland, then agitated by a general insurrection in favour of James; but, actuated by some remnant of attachment to his old benefactor, he eluded on various pretences complying with the order, till the battle of the Boyne had extinguished the hopes of the dethroned monarch, when he came over and made himself master of Cork and Kinsale. In 1691 he was sent again into Flanders, in order to act under the immediate orders of William, who was then, with heroic constancy, contending with the still superior forces of France; but hardly had he landed there when he was arrested, deprived of all his commands, and sent to the Tower of London, along with several of the noblemen of distinction in the British senate.

Upon this part of the history of Marlborough there hangs a veil of mystery, which all the papers brought to light in more recent times have not entirely removed. At the time, his disgrace was by many attributed to some cutting sarcasms in which he had indulged on the predilection of William for the continental troops, and especially the Dutch; by others, to intrigues conducted by Lady Marlborough and him, to obtain for the Princess Anne a larger pension than the king was disposed to allow her. But neither of these causes are sufficient to explain the fall and arrest of so eminent a man as Marlborough, and who had rendered such important services to the newly-established monarch. It would appear from what has transpired in later times, that a much more serious cause had produced the rupture between him and William. The charge brought against him at the time, but which was not prosecuted, as it was found to rest on false or insufficient evidence, was that of having, along with Lords Salisbury, Cornbury, the Bishop of Rochester, and Sir Basil Ferebrace, signed the scheme of an association for the restoration of James. Sir John Fenwick, who was executed for a treasonable correspondence with James II. shortly after Marlborough's arrest, declared in the course of his trial that he was privy to the design, had received the pardon of the exiled monarch, and had engaged to procure for him the adhesion of the army. The Papers, published in Coxe, rather corroborate the view that he was privy to it; and it is supported by those found at Rome in the possession of Cardinal York.[3] That Marlborough, disgusted with the partiality of William for his Dutch troops, and irritated at the open severity of his Government, should have repented of his abandonment of his former sovereign and benefactor, is highly probable. But it can scarcely be taken as an apology for one act of treason, that he meditated the commission of another. It only shows how perilous, in public as in private life, is any deviation from the path of integrity, that it impelled such a man into so tortuous and disreputable a path.

Marlborough, however, was a man whose services were too valuable to the newly-established dynasty, for him to be permitted to remain long in disgrace. He was soon liberated, indeed, from the Tower, as no sufficient evidence of his alleged accession to the conspiracy had been obtained. Several years elapsed, however, before he emerged from the privacy into which he prudently retired on his liberation from confinement. Queen Mary having been carried off by the smallpox on the 17th of January 1696, Marlborough wisely abstained from even taking part in the debates which followed in Parliament, during which some of the malcontents dropped hints as to the propriety of conferring the crown on his immediate patroness, the Princess Anne. This prudent reserve, together with the absence of any decided proofs at the time of Marlborough's correspondence with James, seems to have at length weakened William's resentment, and by degrees he was taken back into favour. The peace of Ryswick, signed on the 20th of September 1697, having consolidated the power of that monarch, Marlborough was, on the 19th of June 1698, made preceptor of the young Duke of Gloucester, his nephew, son of the Princess Anne, and heir-presumptive to the throne; and this appointment, which at once restored his credit at court, was accompanied by the gracious expression – "My lord, make

[3] "During the interval between the liberation of Marlborough and the death of Queen Mary, we find him, in conjunction with Godolphin and many others, maintaining a clandestine intercourse with the exiled family. On the 2d May 1694, only a few days before he offered his services to King William, he communicated to James, through Colonel Sackville, intelligence of an expedition then fitting out, for the purpose of destroying the fleet in Brest harbour." – Coxe's *Marlborough*, i. 75. "Marlborough's conduct to the Stuarts," says Lord Mahon, "was a foul blot on his memory. To the last he persevered in those deplorable intrigues. In October 1713, he protested to a Jacobite agent he would rather have his hands cut off than do any thing to prejudice King James." – Mahon, i. 21-22.

my nephew to resemble yourself, and he will be every thing which I can desire." On the same day he was re-appointed to his rank as a privy councillor, and took the oaths and his seat accordingly. So fully had he now regained the confidence of William, that he was three times named one of the nine lords justiciars to whom the administration of affairs in Great Britain was subsequently entrusted, during the temporary absence of William in Holland; and the War of the Succession having become certain in the year 1700, that monarch, who was preparing to take an active part in it, appointed Marlborough, on 1st June 1701, his ambassador-extraordinary at the Hague, and commander-in-chief of the Allied forces in Flanders. This double appointment in effect invested Marlborough with the entire direction of affairs civil and military, so far as England was concerned, on the Continent. William, who was highly indignant at the recognition of the Chevalier St George as King of England, on the death of his father James II., in September 1701, was preparing to prosecute the war with the vigour and perseverance which so eminently distinguished his character, when he was carried off by the effects of a fall from his horse, on the 19th March 1702. But that event made no alteration in the part which England took in the war which was commencing, and it augmented rather than diminished the influence which Marlborough had in its direction. The Princess Anne, with whom, both individually and through Lady Marlborough, he was so intimately connected, mounted the throne without opposition; and one of her first acts was to bestow on Marlborough the order of the Garter, confirm him in his former offices, and appoint him, in addition, her plenipotentiary at the Hague. War was declared on the 15th May 1702, and Marlborough immediately went over to the Netherlands to take the command of the Allied army, sixty thousand strong, then lying before Nimeguen, which was threatened by a superior force on the part of the French.

It is at this period – time 1702 – that the great and memorable, and withal blameless period of Marlborough's life commenced; the next ten years were one unbroken series of efforts, victories, and glory. He arrived in the camp at Nimeguen on the evening of the 2d July, having been a few weeks before at the Hague; and immediately assumed the command. Lord Athlone, who had previously enjoyed that situation, at first laid claim to an equal authority with him; but this ruinous division, which never is safe, save with men so great as he and Eugene, and would unquestionably have proved ruinous to the common cause if shared with Athlone, was prevented by the States-General, who insisted upon the undivided direction being conferred on Marlborough. Most fortunately it is precisely at this period that the correspondence now published commences, which, in the three volumes already published, presents an unbroken series of his letters to persons of every description down to May, 1708. They thus embrace the early successes in Flanders, the cross march into Bavaria and battle of Blenheim, the expulsion of the French from Germany, the battle of Ramillies, and taking of Brussels and Antwerp, the mission to the King of Sweden at Dresden, the battle of Almanza, in Spain, and all the important events of the first six years of the war. More weighty and momentous materials for history never were presented to the public; and their importance will not be properly appreciated, if the previous condition of Europe, and imminent hazard to the independence of all the adjoining states, from the unmeasured ambition, and vast power of Louis XIV., is not taken into consideration.

Accustomed as we are to regard the Bourbons as a fallen and unfortunate race, the objects rather of commiseration than apprehension, and Napoleon as the only sovereign who has really threatened our independence, and all but effected the subjugation of the Continent, we can scarcely conceive the terror with which a century and a half ago they, with reason, inspired all Europe, or the narrow escape which the continental states, at least, then made from being all reduced to the condition of provinces of France. The forces of that monarchy, at all times formidable to its neighbours, from the warlike spirit of its inhabitants, and their rapacious disposition, conspicuous alike in the earliest and the latest times;[4] its central situation, forming, as it were, the salient angle of a bastion projecting into the centre of Germany; and its numerous population – were then, in a peculiar manner, to be dreaded, from their

[4] "Galli turpe esse ducunt frumentum manu quærere; itaque armati alienos agros demetunt." – Cæsar.

concentration in the hands of an able and ambitious monarch, who had succeeded for the first time, for two hundred years, in healing the divisions and stilling the feuds of its nobles, and turned their buoyant energy into the channel of foreign conquest. Immense was the force which, by this able policy, was found to exist in France, and terrible the danger which it at once brought upon the neighbouring states. It was rendered the more formidable in the time of Louis XIV., from the extraordinary concentration of talent which his discernment or good fortune had collected around his throne, and the consummate talent, civil and military, with which affairs were directed. Turenne, Boufflers, and Condé, were his generals; Vauban was his engineer, Louvois and Torcy were his statesmen. The lustre of the exploits of these illustrious men, in itself great, was much enhanced by the still greater blaze of fame which encircled his throne, from the genius of the literary men who have given such immortal celebrity to his reign. Corneille and Racine were his tragedians; Molière wrote his comedies; Bossuet, Fénélon, and Bourdaloue were his theologians; Massillon his preacher, Boileau his critic; Le Notre laid out his gardens; Le Brun painted his halls. Greatness had come upon France, as, in truth, it does to most other states, in all departments at the same time; and the adjoining nations, alike intimidated by a power which they could not resist, and dazzled by a glory which they could not emulate, had come almost to despair of maintaining their independence; and were sinking into that state of apathy, which is at once the consequence and the cause of extraordinary reverses.

The influence of these causes had distinctly appeared in the extraordinary good fortune which had attended the enterprises of Louis, and the numerous conquests he had made since he had launched into the career of foreign aggrandizement. Nothing could resist his victorious arms. At the head of an army of an hundred thousand men, directed by Turenne, he speedily overran Flanders. Its fortified cities yielded to the science of Vauban, or the terrors of his name. The boasted barrier of the Netherlands was passed in a few weeks; hardly any of its far-famed fortresses made any resistance. The passage of the Rhine was achieved under the eyes of the monarch with little loss, and melodramatic effect. One half of Holland was soon overrun, and the presence of the French army at the gates of Amsterdam seemed to presage immediate destruction to the United Provinces; and but for the firmness of their leaders, and a fortunate combination of circumstances, unquestionably would have done so. The alliance with England, in the early part of his reign, and the junction of the fleets of Britain and France to ruin their fleets and blockade their harbours, seemed to deprive them of their last resource, derived from their energetic industry. Nor were substantial fruits awanting from these conquests. Alsace and Franche Comté were overrun, and, with Lorraine, permanently annexed to the French monarchy; and although, by the peace of Nimeguen, part of his acquisitions in Flanders was abandoned, enough was retained by the devouring monarchy to deprive the Dutch of the barrier they had so ardently desired, and render their situation to the last degree precarious, in the neighbourhood of so formidable a power. The heroic William, indeed, had not struggled in vain for the independence of his country. The distant powers of Europe, at length wakened to a sense of their danger, had made strenuous efforts to coerce the ambition of France; the revolution of 1688 had restored England to its natural place in the van of the contest for continental freedom; and the peace of Ryswick in 1697 had in some degree seen the trophies of conquests more equally balanced between the contending parties. But still it was with difficulty that the alliance kept its ground against Louis – any untoward event, the defection of any considerable power, would at once, it was felt, cast the balance in his favour; and all history had demonstrated how many are the chances against any considerable confederacy keeping for any length of time together, when the immediate danger which had stilled their jealousies, and bound together their separate interests, is in appearance removed. Such was the dubious and anxious state of Europe, when the death of Charles II. at Madrid, on the 1st November 1700, and the bequest of his vast territories to Philip Duke of Anjou, second son of the Dauphin, and grandson of Louis XIV., threatened at once to place the immense resources of the Castilian monarchy at the disposal of the ambitious monarch of France, whose passion for glory

had not diminished with his advanced years, and whose want of moderation was soon evinced by his accepting, after an affected hesitation, the splendid bequest.

Threatened with so serious a danger, it is not surprising that the powers of Europe were in the utmost alarm, and erelong took steps to endeavour to avert it. Such, however, was the terror inspired by the name of Louis XIV., and the magnitude of the addition made by this bequest to his power, that the new monarch, in the first instance, ascended the throne of Spain and the Indies without any opposition. The Spanish Netherlands, so important both from their intrinsic riches, their situation as the certain theatre of war, and the numerous fortified towns with which they were studded, had been early secured for the young Bourbon prince by the Elector of Bavaria, who was at that time the governor of those valuable possessions. Sardinia, Naples, Sicily, the Milanese, and the other Spanish possessions in Italy, speedily followed the example. The distant colonies of the crown of Castile, in America and the Indies, sent in their adhesion. The young Prince of Anjou made his formal entry into Spain in the beginning of 1701, and was crowned at Madrid under the title of Philip V. The principal continental powers, with the exception of the Emperor, acknowledged his title to the throne. The Dutch were in despair: they beheld the power of Louis XIV. brought to their very gates. Flanders, instead of being the barrier of Europe against France, had become the outwork of France against Europe. The flag of Louis XIV. floated on Antwerp, Brussels, and Ghent. Italy, France, Spain, and Flanders, were united in one close league, and in fact formed but one dominion. It was the empire of Charlemagne over again, directed with equal ability, founded on greater power, and backed by the boundless treasures of the Indies. Spain had threatened the liberties of Europe in the end of the sixteenth century: France had all but proved fatal to them in the close of the seventeenth. What hope was there of being able to make head against them both, united under such a head as Louis XIV.?

Great as these dangers were, however, they had no effect in daunting the heroic spirit of William III. In concert with the Emperor, and the United Provinces, who were too nearly threatened to be backward in falling into his views, he laboured for the formation of a great confederacy, which might prevent the union of the crowns of France and Castile in one family, and prevent, before it was too late, the consolidation of a power which threatened to be so formidable to the liberties of Europe. The death of that intrepid monarch in March 1702, which, had it taken place earlier, might have prevented the formation of the confederacy, as it was, proved no impediment, but rather the reverse. His measures had been so well taken, his resolute spirit had laboured with such effect, that the alliance, offensive and defensive, between the Emperor, England, and Holland, had been already signed. The accession of the Princess Anne, without weakening its bonds, added another power, of no mean importance, to its ranks. Her husband, Prince George of Denmark, brought the forces of that kingdom to aid the common cause. Prussia soon after followed the example. On the other hand, Bavaria, closely connected with the French and Spanish monarchies, both by jealousy of Austria, and the government of the Netherlands, which its Elector held, adhered to France. Thus the forces of Europe were mutually arrayed and divided, much as they afterwards were in the coalition against Napoleon in 1813. It might already be foreseen, that Flanders, the Bavarian plains, Spain, and Lombardy, would, as in the great contest which followed a century after, be the theatre of war. But the forces of France and Spain possessed this advantage, unknown in former wars, but immense in a military point of view, that they were in possession of the whole of the Netherlands, the numerous fortresses of which were alike valuable as a basis of offensive operations, and as affording asylums all but impregnable in cases of disaster. The Allied generals, whether they commenced their operations in Flanders or on the side of Germany, had to begin on the Rhine, and cut their way through the long barrier of fortresses with which the genius of Vauban and Cohorn had encircled the frontiers of the monarchy.

War having been resolved on, the first step was taken by the Emperor, who laid claim to Milan as a fief of the empire, and supported his pretensions by moving an army into Italy under the command of Prince Eugene of Savoy, who afterwards became so celebrated as the brother and worthy rival of Marlborough in arms. The French and Spaniards assembled an army in the Milanese to resist his

advance; and the Duke of Mantua having joined the cause, that important city was garrisoned by the French troops. But Prince Eugene erelong obliged them to fall back from the banks of the Adige to the line of the Oglio, on which they made a stand. But though hostilities had thus commenced in Italy, negotiations were still carried on at the Hague; though unhappily the pretensions of the French king were found to be of so exorbitant a character, that an accommodation was impossible. Marlborough's first mission to the Continent, however, after the accession of Anne, was of a diplomatic character; and it was by his unwearied efforts, suavity of manner, and singular talents for negotiation, that the difficulties which attend the formation of all such extensive confederacies were overcome. And it was not till war was declared, on 4th May 1702, that he first took the command as commander-in-chief of the Allied armies.

The first operation of the Allies was an attack on the small fort of Kaiserworth, on the right bank of the Rhine, which belonged to the Elector of Cologne, which surrendered on the 15th May. The main French army, nominally under the direction of the Duke of Burgundy, really of Marshal Boufflers, entered the Duchy of Cleves in the end of the same month, and soon became engaged with the Allied forces, which at first, being inferior in numbers, fell back. Marlborough reached headquarters when the French lay before Nimeguen; and the Dutch trembled for that frontier town. Reinforcements, however, rapidly came in from all quarters to join the Allied army; and Marlborough, finding himself at the head of a gallant force sixty thousand strong, resolved to commence offensive operations. His first operation was the siege of Venloo, which was carried by storm on the 18th September, after various actions in the course of the siege. "My Lord Cutts," says Marlborough, "commanded at one of the breaches; and the English grenadiers had the honour of being the first that entered the fort."[5] Ruremonde was next besieged; and the Allies, steadily advancing, opened the navigation of the Meuse as far as Maestricht. Stevenswart was taken on the 1st October; and, on the 6th, Ruremonde surrendered. Liege was the next object of attack; and the breaches of the citadel were, by the skilful operations of Cohorn, who commanded the Allied engineers and artillery, declared practicable on the 23d of the same month. The assault was immediately ordered; and "by the extraordinary bravery," says Marlborough, "of the officers and soldiers, the citadel was carried by storm; and, for the honour of her Majesty's subjects, the English were the first that got upon the breach."[6] So early in this, as in every other war where ignorance and infatuation has not led them into the field, did the native-born valour of the Anglo-Saxon race make itself known! Seven battalions and a half were made prisoners on this occasion; and so disheartened was the enemy by the fall of the citadel, that the castle of the Chartreuse, with its garrison of 1500 men, capitulated a few days afterwards. This last success gave the Allies the entire command of Liege, and concluded this short but glorious campaign, in the course of which they had made themselves masters by main force, in presence of the French army, of four fortified towns, conquered all Spanish Guelderland, opened the Meuse as far as Maestricht, carried the strong castles of Liege by storm, advanced their standards from the Rhine far into Flanders, and become enabled to take up their winter quarters in the enemy's territory, amidst its fertile fields.

The campaign being now concluded, and both parties having gone into winter quarters, Marlborough embarked on the Meuse to return to London, where his presence was much required to steady the authority and direct the cabinet of the Queen, who had so recently taken her seat on the throne. When dropping down the Meuse, in company of the Dutch commissioners, he was made prisoner by a French partisan, who had made an incursion into those parts; and owed his escape to the presence of mind of a servant named Gill, who, unperceived, put into his master's hands an old passport in the name of General Churchill. The Frenchman, intent only on plunder, seized all the plate and valuables in the boat, and made prisoners the small detachment of soldiers who

[5] *Despatches*, 21st September 1702.

[6] *Despatches*, 23d October 1702.

accompanied them; but, ignorant of the inestimable prize within his grasp, allowed the remainder of the party, including Marlborough, to proceed on their way. On this occasion, it may truly be said, the boat carried Cæsar and his fortunes. He arrived in safety at the Hague, where the people, who regarded him as their guardian angel, and had heard of his narrow escape, received him with the most enthusiastic acclamations. From thence, having concerted the plan with the Dutch government for the ensuing campaign, he crossed over to London, where his reception by the Queen and nation was of the most gratifying description. Her Majesty conferred on him the title of Duke of Marlborough and Marquis of Blandford, and sent a message to the House of Commons, suggesting a pension to him of £5000 a-year, secured on the revenue of the post-office; but that House refused to consent to the alienation of so considerable a part of the public revenue. He was amply compensated, however, for this disappointment, by the enthusiastic reception he met with from all classes of the nation, which, long unaccustomed to military success, at least in any cause in which it could sympathize, hailed with transports of joy this first revival of triumph in support of the Protestant faith, and over that power with whom, for centuries, they had maintained so constant a rivalry.

The campaign of 1703 was not fruitful of great events. Taught, by the untoward issue of the preceding one, the quality of the general and army with whom he had to contend, the French general cautiously remained on the defensive; and so skilfully were the measures of Marshal Boufflers taken, that all the efforts of Marlborough were unable to force him to a general action. The war in Flanders was thus limited to one of posts and sieges; but in that the superiority of the Allied arms was successfully asserted, Parliament having been prevailed on to consent to an augmentation of the British contingent. But a treaty having been concluded with Sweden, and various reinforcements having been received from the lesser powers, preparations were made for the siege of Bonn, on the Rhine, a frontier town of Flanders, of great importance from its commanding the passage of that artery of Germany, and stopping, while in the enemy's hands, all transit of military stores or provisions for the use of the armies in Bavaria, or on the Upper Rhine. The batteries opened with seventy heavy guns and English mortars on the 14th May 1704; a vigorous sortie with a thousand foot was repulsed, after having at first gained some success, on the following day, and on the 16th two breaches having been declared practicable, the garrison surrendered at discretion. After this success, the army moved against Huys, and it was taken with its garrison of 900 men on the 23d August. Marlborough and the English generals, after this success, were decidedly of opinion that it would be advisable at all hazard to attempt forcing the French lines, which were strongly fortified between Mehaigne and Leuwe, and a strong opinion to that effect was transmitted to the Hague on the very day after the fall of Huys.[7] They alleged with reason, that the Allies being superior in Flanders, and the French having the upper hand in Germany and Italy, it was of the utmost importance to follow up the present tide of success in the only quarter where it flowed in their favour, and counterbalance disasters elsewhere, by decisive events in the quarter where it was most material to obtain it. The Dutch government, however, set on getting a barrier for themselves, could not be brought to agree to this course, how great soever the advantages which it promised, and insisted instead, that he should undertake the siege of Limbourg, which lay open to attack. This was accordingly done; the trenches were commenced in the middle of September, and the garrison capitulated on the 27th of the same month: a poor compensation for the total defeat of the French army, which would in all probability have ensued if the bolder plan of operation he had so earnestly counselled had been adopted.[8] This terminated the campaign of 1703,

[7] Memorial, 24th August 1703. —*Despatches*, i. 165.

[8] Marlborough was much chagrined at being interrupted in his meditated decisive operations by the States-General, on this occasion. On the 6th September, he wrote to them: – "Vos Hautes Puissances jugeront bien par le camp que nous venons de prendre, qu'on n'a pas voulu se résoudre à tenter les lignes. J'ai été convaincu de plus en plus, depuis l'honneur que j'ai eu de vous écrire, par les avis que j'ai reçu journellement de la situation des ennemis, que cette entreprise n'était pas seulement practicable, mais même qu'on pourrait en espérer tout le succès que je m'étais proposé: enfin l'occasion en est perdue, et je souhaite de tout mon cœur qu'elle n'ait aucune fâcheuse suite, et qu'on n'ait pas lieu de s'en repentir quand il sera trop tard." – Marlborough *aux Etats Généraux*; *6 Septembre 1703. Despatches*, i. 173.

which, though successful, had led to very different results from what might have been anticipated if Marlborough's advice had been followed, and an earlier victory of Ramillies laid open the whole Flemish plains. Having dispatched eight battalions to reinforce the Prince of Hesse, who had sustained serious disaster on the Moselle, he had an interview with the Archduke Charles, whom the Allies had acknowledged as King of Spain, who presented him with a magnificent sword set with diamonds, and set out for the Hague, from whence he again returned to London to concert measures for the ensuing campaign, and stimulate the British government to the efforts necessary for its successful prosecution.

But while success had thus attended all the operations of the Allies in Flanders, where the English contingent acted, and Marlborough had the command, affairs had assumed a very different aspect in Germany and Italy. The French were there superior alike in the number and quality of their troops, and, in Germany at least, in the skill with which they were commanded. Early in June, Marshal Tallard assumed the command of the French forces in Alsace, passed the Rhine at Strasburg on the 16th July, took Brissac on the 7th September, and invested Landau on the 16th October. The Allies, under the Prince of Hesse, attempted to raise the siege, but were defeated with considerable loss; and, soon after, Landau surrendered, thus terminating with disaster the campaign on the Upper Rhine. Still more considerable were the disasters sustained in Bavaria. Marshal Villars there commanded, and at the head of the French and Bavarians, defeated General Stirum, who headed the Imperialists, on the 20th September. In December, Marshal Marsin, who had succeeded Villars in the command, made himself master of the important city of Augsburg, and in January 1704 the Bavarians got possession of Passau. Meanwhile, a formidable insurrection had broken out in Hungary, which so distracted the cabinet of Vienna, that that capital itself seemed to be threatened by the combined forces of the French and Bavarians after the fall of Passau. No event of importance took place in Italy during the campaign; Count Strahremberg, who commanded the Imperial forces, having with great ability forced the Duke de Vendôme, who was at the head of a superior body of French troops, to retire. But in Bavaria and on the Danube, it was evident that the Allies were overmatched; and to the restoration of the balance in that quarter, the anxious attention of the confederates was turned during the winter of 1703-4. The dangerous state of the Emperor and the empire awakened the greatest solicitude at the Hague, as well as unbounded terror at Vienna, from whence the most urgent representations were made on the necessity of reinforcements being sent from Marlborough to their support. But though this was agreed to by England and Holland, so straitened were the Dutch finances, that they were wholly unable to form the necessary magazines to enable the Allies to commence operations. Marlborough, during the whole of January and February 1704, was indefatigable in his efforts to overcome these difficulties; and the preparations having at length been completed, it was agreed by the States, according to a plan of the campaign laid down by Marlborough, that he himself should proceed into Bavaria with the great body of the Allied army in Flanders, leaving only an army of observation there, to restrain any incursion which the French troops might attempt during his absence.

Marlborough began his march with the great body of his forces on the 8th May, and crossing the Meuse at Maestricht, proceeded with the utmost expedition towards the Rhine by Bedbourg and Kirpen, and arrived at Bonn on the 22d May. Meanwhile, the French were also powerfully reinforcing their army on the Danube. Early in the same month 26,000 men joined the Elector of Bavaria, while Villeroi with the army of Flanders was hastening in the same direction. Marlborough having obtained intelligence of these great additions to the enemy's forces in the vital quarter, wrote to the States-General, that unless they promptly sent him succour, the Emperor would be entirely ruined.[9] Meanwhile, however, relying chiefly on himself, he redoubled his activity and diligence. Continuing his march up the Rhine by Coblentz and Cassel, opposite Mayence, he crossed the Necker near

[9] "Ce matin j'ai appris par une estafette que les ennemis avaient joint l'Electeur de Bavière avec 26,000 hommes, et que M. de Villeroi a passé la Meuse avec la meilleure partie de l'armée des Pays Bas, et qu'il poussait sa marche en toute diligence vers la Moselle, de sorte que, sans un prompt sécours, l'empire court risque d'être entièrement abimé." – Marlborough, *aux Etats Généraux; Bonn*, *2 Mai 1704*. *Despatches*, i. 274.

Ladenbourg on the 3d June. From thence he pursued his march without intermission by Mundelshene, where he had, on the 10th June, his first interview with Prince Eugene, who had been called from Italy to co-operate in stemming the torrent of disaster in Germany. From thence he advanced by Great Heppach to Langenau, and first came in contact with the enemy on the 2d July, on the Schullenberg, near Donawert. Marlborough, at the head of the advanced guard of nine thousand men, there attacked the French and Bavarians, 12,000 strong, in their intrenched camp, which was extremely strong, and after a desperate resistance, aided by an opportune attack by the Prince of Baden, who commanded the Emperor's forces, carried the intrenchments, with the whole artillery which they mounted, and the loss of 7000 men and thirteen standards to the vanquished. He was inclined to venture upon this hazardous attempt by having received intelligence on the same day from Prince Eugene, that Marshals Villeroi and Tallard, at the head of fifty battalions, and sixty squadrons of their best troops, had arrived at Strasburg, and were using the utmost diligence to reach the Bavarian forces through the defiles of the Black Forest.

This brilliant opening of the German campaign was soon followed by substantial results. A few days after Rain surrendered, Aicha was carried by assault; and, following up his career of success, Marlborough advanced to within a league of Augsburg, under the cannon of which the Elector of Bavaria was placed with the remnant of his forces, in a situation too strong to admit of its being forced. He here made several attempts to detach the Elector, who was now reduced to the greatest straits, from the French alliance; but that prince, relying on the great army, forty-five thousand strong, which Marshal Tallard was bringing up to his support from the Rhine, adhered with honourable fidelity to his engagements. Upon this, Marlborough took post near Friburg, in such a situation as to cut him off from all communication with his dominions; and ravaged the country with his light troops, levying contributions wherever they went, and burning the villages with savage ferocity as far as the gates of Munich. Thus was avenged the barbarous desolation of the Palatinate, thirty years before, by the French army under the orders of Marshal Turenne. Overcome by the cries of his suffering subjects, the Elector at length consented to enter into a negotiation, which made some progress; but the rapid approach of Marshal Tallard with the French army through the Black Forest, caused him to break it off, and hazard all on the fortune of war. Unable to induce the Elector, by the barbarities unhappily, at that time, too frequent on all sides in war, either to quit his intrenched camp under the cannon of Augsburg, or abandon the French alliance, the English general undertook the siege of Ingolstadt; he himself with the main body of the army covering the siege, and Prince Louis of Baden conducting the operations in the trenches. Upon this, the Elector of Bavaria broke up from his strong position, and, abandoning with heroic resolution his own country, marched to Biberbach, where he effected his junction with Marshal Tallard, who now threatened Prince Eugene with an immediate attack. No sooner had he received intelligence of this, than Marlborough, on the 10th of August, sent the Duke of Wirtemburg with twenty-seven squadrons of horse to reinforce the prince; and early next morning detached General Churchill with twenty battalions across the Danube, to be in a situation to support him in case of need. He himself immediately after followed, and joined the Prince with his whole army on the 11th. Every thing now presaged decisive events. The Elector had boldly quitted Bavaria, leaving his whole dominions at the mercy of the enemy, except the fortified cities of Munich and Augsburg, and periled his crown upon the issue of war at the French headquarters; while Marlborough and Eugene had united their forces, with a determination to give battle in the heart of Germany, in the enemy's territory, with their communications exposed to the utmost hazard, under circumstances where defeat could be attended with nothing short of total ruin.

The French and Bavarian army consisted of fifty-five thousand men, of whom nearly forty-five thousand were French troops, the very best which the monarchy could produce. Marlborough and Eugene had sixty-six battalions and one hundred and sixty squadrons, which, with the artillery, might be about fifty thousand combatants. The forces on the opposite sides were thus nearly equal in point of numerical amount; but there was a wide difference in their composition. Four-fifths of

the French army were national troops, speaking the same language, animated by the same feelings, accustomed to the same discipline, and the most of whom had been accustomed to act together. The Allies, on the other hand, were a motley assemblage, like Hannibal's at Cannæ, or Wellington's at Waterloo, composed of the troops of many different nations, speaking different languages, trained to different discipline, but recently assembled together, and under the orders of a stranger general, one of those haughty islanders, little in general inured to war, but whose cold or supercilious manners had so often caused jealousies to arise in the best cemented confederacies. English, Prussians, Danes, Wirtemburgers, Dutch, Hanoverians, and Hessians, were blended in such nearly equal proportions, that the arms of no one state could be said by its numerical preponderance to be entitled to the precedence. But the consummate address, splendid talents, and conciliatory manners of Marlborough, as well as the brilliant valour which the English auxiliary force had displayed on many occasions, had won for them the lead, as they had formerly done when in no greater force among the confederates under Richard Cœur-de-Lion in the Holy War. It was universally felt that upon them, as the Tenth Legion of Cæsar, or the Old Guard of Napoleon, the weight of the contest at the decisive moment would fall. The army was divided into two *corps-d'armée*; the first commanded by the duke in person, being by far the strongest, destined to bear the weight of the contest, and carry in front the enemy's position. These two corps, though co-operating, were at such a distance from each other, that they were much in the situation of the English and Prussians at Waterloo, or Napoleon and Ney's corps at Bautzen. The second, under Prince Eugene, which consisted chiefly of cavalry, was much weaker in point of numerical amount, and was intended for a subordinate attack, to distract the enemy's attention from the principal onset in front under Marlborough.[10] With ordinary officers, or even eminent generals of a second order, a dangerous rivalry for the supreme command would unquestionably have arisen, and added to the many seeds of division and causes of weakness which already existed in so multifarious an array. But these great men were superior to all such petty jealousies. Each, conscious of powers to do great things, and proud of fame already acquired, was willing to yield what was necessary for the common good to the other. They had no rivalry, save a noble emulation who should do most for the common cause in which they were jointly engaged. From the moment of their junction it was agreed that they should take the command of the whole army day about; and so perfectly did their views on all points coincide, and so entirely did their noble hearts beat in unison, that during eight subsequent campaigns that they for the most part acted together, there was never the slightest division between them, nor any interruption of the harmony with which the operations of the Allies were conducted.

The French position was in places strong, and their disposition for resistance at each point where they were threatened by attack from the Allied forces, judicious; but there was a fatal defect in its general conception. Marshal Tallard was on the right, resting on the Danube, which secured him from being turned in that quarter, having the village of Blenheim in his front, which was strongly garrisoned by twenty-six battalions and twelve squadrons, all native French troops. In the centre was the village of Oberglau, which was occupied by fourteen battalions, among whom were three Irish corps of celebrated veterans. The communication between Blenheim and Oberglau was kept up by a screen consisting of eighty squadrons, in two lines, having two brigades of foot, consisting of seven battalions, in its centre. The left, opposite Prince Eugene, was under the orders of Marshal Marsin, and consisted of twenty-two battalions of infantry and thirty-six squadrons, consisting for the most part of Bavarians and Marshal Marsin's men, posted in front of the village of Lutzingen. Thus the French consisted of sixty-nine battalions and a hundred and thirty-four squadrons, and were posted in a line strongly supported at each extremity, but weak in the centre, and with the wings, where the great body of the infantry was placed, at such a distance from each other, that, if the centre was broken through, each ran the risk of being enveloped by the enemy, without the other being able to

[10] The following was the composition of these two corps, which will show of what a motley array the Allied army was composed: —

render them any assistance. This danger as to the troops in Blenheim, the flower of their army, was much augmented by the circumstance, that if their centre was forced where it was formed of cavalry only, and the victors turned sharp round towards Blenheim, the horse would be driven headlong into the Danube, and the foot in that village would run the hazard of being surrounded or pushed into that river, which was not fordable, even for horse, in any part. But though these circumstances would, to a far-seeing general, have presaged serious disaster in the event of defeat, yet the position was strong in itself, and the French generals, long accustomed to victory, had some excuse for not having taken sufficiently into view the contingencies likely to occur in the event of defeat. Both the villages at the extremity of their line had been strengthened, not only with intrenchments hastily thrown up around them, thickly mounted with heavy cannon, but with barricades at all their principal entrances, formed of overturned carts and all the furniture of the houses, which they had seized upon, as the insurgents did at Paris in 1830, for that purpose. The army stood upon a hill or gentle eminence, the guns from which commanded the whole plain by which alone it could be approached; and this plain was low, and intersected on the right, in front of Blenheim, by a rivulet which flows down by a gentle descent to the Danube, and in front of Oberglau by another rivulet, which runs in two branches till within a few paces of the Danube; into which it also empties itself. These rivulets had bridges over them at the points where they flowed through villages; but they were difficult of passage in the other places for cavalry and artillery, and, with the ditches cut in the swampy meadows through which they flowed, proved no small impediment to the advance of the Allied army.

The Duke of Marlborough, before the action began, in person visited each important battery, in order to ascertain the range of the guns. The troops under his command were drawn up in four lines; the infantry being in front, and the cavalry behind, in each line. This arrangement was adopted in order that the infantry, which would get easiest through the streams, might form on the other side, and cover the formation of the cavalry, who might be more impeded. The fire of cannon soon became very animated on both sides, and the infantry advanced to the edge of the rivulets with that cheerful air and confident step which is so often the forerunner of success. On Prince Eugene's side the impediments, however, proved serious; the beds of the rivulets were so broad, that they required to be filled up with fascines before they could be passed by the guns; and when they did get across, they replied without much effect to the French cannon thundering from the heights, which commanded the whole field. At half-past twelve, however, these difficulties were, by great efforts on the part of Prince Eugene and his wing, overcome, and he sent word to Marlborough that he was ready. The English general instantly called for his horse; the troops every where stood to their arms, and the signal was given to advance. The rivulets and marshy ground in front of Blenheim and Unterglau were passed by the first line without much difficulty, though under a heavy fire of artillery from the French batteries; and the firm ground on the slope being reached, the first line advanced in the finest order to the attack – the cavalry in front having now defiled to a side, so as to let the English infantry take the lead. The attack must be given in the words of Dr Hare's Journal.

> "Lord Cutts made the first attack upon Blenheim, with the English grenadiers. Brigadier-general Rowe led up his brigade, which formed the first line, and was sustained in the second by a brigade of Hessians. Rowe was within thirty paces of the palisades about Blenheim when the enemy gave their first fire, by which a great many officers and men fell; but notwithstanding this, that brave officer marched direct up to the pales, on which he struck his sword before he allowed his men to fire. His orders were to enter at the point of the bayonet; but the superiority of the enemy, and the strength of their post, rendered this impossible. The first line was therefore forced to retire; Rowe was struck down badly wounded at the foot of the pales; his lieut. – colonel and major were killed in endeavouring to bring him off, and some squadrons of French gens-d'armes having charged the brigade while retiring in disorder, it was partially broken, and one of the colours of Rowe's regiment was

taken. The Hessians in the second line upon this advanced briskly forward, charged the squadrons, retook the colour, and repulsed them. Lord Cutts, however, seeing fresh squadrons coming down upon him, sent to request some cavalry should be sent to cover his flank. Five British squadrons accordingly were moved up, and speedily charged by eight of the enemy; the French gave their fire at a little distance, but the English charged sword in hand, and put them to the rout. Being overpowered, however, by fresh squadrons, and galled by the fire which issued from the enclosures of Blenheim, our horse were driven back in their turn, and recoiled in disorder.

"Marlborough, foreseeing that the enemy would pursue this advantage, resolved to bring his whole cavalry across the rivulets. The operation was begun by the English horse. It proved more difficult, however, than was expected, especially to the English squadrons; as they had to cross the rivulet where it was divided, and the meadows were very soft. However, they surmounted those difficulties, and got over; but when they advanced, they were so severely galled by the infantry in Blenheim firing upon their flank, while the cavalry charged them in front, that they were forced to retire, which they did, under cover of Bulow and Bothmer's German dragoons, who succeeded them in the passage. Marlborough, seeing the enemy resolute to maintain the ground occupied by his cavalry, gave orders for the whole remainder of his cavalry to pass wherever they could get across. There was very great difficulty and danger in defiling over the rivulet in the face of an enemy, already formed and supported by several batteries of cannon; yet by the brave examples and intrepidity of the officers, they were at length got over, and kept their ground on the other side. Bulow stretched across, opposite to Oberglau, with the Danish and Hanoverian horse; but near that village they were so vigorously charged by the French cavalry, that they were driven back. Rallying, they were again led to the charge, and again routed with great slaughter by the charges of the horse in front, and the dreadful fire from the inclosures of Blenheim. Nor did the attack on Oberglau to the British right, under Prince Holstein, succeed better; no sooner had he passed the rivulet, than the Irish veterans, posted there, came pouring down upon them, took the prince prisoner, and threw the whole into confusion. Upon this, Marlborough galloped to the spot at the head of some squadrons, followed by three battalions, which had not yet been engaged. With the horse he charged the Irish battalions in flank, and forced them back; the foot he posted himself, and having re-established affairs at that point, returned rapidly to the left, where he found the whole of his corps passed over the streams, and on firm ground on the other side. The horse were drawn up in two lines fronting the enemy; the foot in two lines behind them; and some guns, under Colonel Blood, having been hurried across by means of pontoons, were brought to bear upon some battalions of foot which were intermingled with the enemy's horse, and made great havoc in their ranks.

"It was now past three, and the Duke, having got his whole men ready for the attack, sent to Prince Eugene to know if he was ready to support him. But the efforts of that gallant prince had not been attended with the same success. In the first onset, indeed, his Danish and Prussian infantry had gained considerable success, and taken six guns, and the Imperial cavalry had, by a vigorous charge, broken the first line of the enemy's horse; but they failed in their attack on the second line, and were driven back to their original ground; whereupon the Bavarian cavalry, rushing forward, enveloped Eugene's foot, who were forced to retire, and with difficulty regained their original ground. Half an hour afterwards, Prince Eugene made a second attack with his horse; but they were again repulsed by the bravery of the Bavarian cavalry,

and driven for refuge into the wood, in the rear of their original position. Nothing daunted by this bad success, the Prince formed his troops for a third attack, and himself led his cavalry to the charge; but so vigorous was the defence, that they were again repulsed to the wood, and the victorious enemy's dragoons with loud cheers charged the Prussian foot in flank, and were only repelled by the admirable steadiness with which they delivered their fire, and stood their ground with fixed bayonets in front.

"About five the general forward movement was made which determined the issue of this great battle, which till then had seemed doubtful. The Duke of Marlborough, having ridden along the front, gave orders to sound the charge, when all at once our lines of horse moved on, sword in hand, to the attack. Those of the enemy presented their carbines at some distance and fired; but they had no sooner done so than they wheeled about, broke, and fled. The gens-d'armes fled towards Hochstedt, which was about two miles in the rear; the other squadrons towards the village of Sondersheim, which was nearer, and on the bank of the Danube. The Duke ordered General Hompesch, with thirty squadrons, to pursue those who fled to Hochstedt; while he himself, with Prince Hesse and the whole remainder of the cavalry, drove thirty of the enemy's squadrons headlong down the banks of the Danube, which, being very steep, occasioned the destruction of the greater part. Vast numbers endeavoured to save themselves by swimming, and perished miserably. Among the prisoners taken here were Marshal Tallard and his suite, who surrendered to M. Beinenbourg, aid-de-camp to the Prince of Hesse. Marlborough immediately desired him to be accommodated with his coach, and sent a pencil note to the duchess[11] to say the victory was gained. Others, seeing the fate of their comrades in the water, endeavoured to save themselves by defiling to the right, along its margin, towards Hochstedt, but they were met and intercepted by some English squadrons; upon seeing which they fled in utter confusion towards Morselingen, and did not again attempt to engage. The victorious horse upon this fell upon several of the enemy's battalions, who had nearly reached Hochstedt, and cut them to pieces.

"Meanwhile Prince Eugene, by a fourth attack, succeeded in driving the Elector of Bavaria from his position; and the Duke, seeing this, sent orders to the squadrons in pursuit, towards Morselingen, to wheel about and join him. All this while the troops in Blenheim had been incessantly attacked, but it still held out and gave employment to the Duke's infantry. The moment the cavalry had beaten off that of the enemy, and cleared the field between the two villages of them, General Churchill moved both lines of foot upon the village of Blenheim, and it was soon surrounded so as to cut off all possibility of escape except on the side next the Danube. To prevent the possibility of their escape that way, Webb, with the Queen's regiment, took possession of a barrier the enemy had constructed to cover their retreat, and, having posted his men across the street which led to the Danube, several hundreds of the enemy, who were attempting to make their escape that way, were made prisoners. The other issue to the Danube was occupied in the same manner by Prince George's regiment: all who came out that way were made prisoners or driven into the Danube. Some endeavoured to break out at other places, but General Wood, with Lord John Hay's regiment of *grey* dragoons (Scots Greys) immediately advanced towards them, and, cantering up to the top of a rising ground, made them believe they had a larger force behind them, and stopped them on that side. When

[11] This pencil note is still preserved at Blenheim.

> Churchill saw the defeat of the enemy's horse decided, he sent to request Lord Cutts to attack them in front, while he himself attacked them in flank. This was accordingly done; the Earl of Orkney and General Ingoldesby entering the village at the same time, at two different places, at the head of their respective regiments. But so vigorous was the resistance made by the enemy, especially at the churchyard, that they were forced to retire. The vehement fire, however, of the cannon and howitzers, which set fire to several barns and houses, added to the circumstance of their commander, M. Clerambault, having fled, and their retreat on all sides being cut off, led to their surrendering at discretion, to the number of six-and-twenty battalions. Thus concluded this great battle, in which the enemy had 5900 more than the Allies,[12] and the advantage of a very strong position, difficult of attack."[13]

In this battle Marlborough's wing lost 3000 men, and Eugene's the same number, in all 6000. The French lost 13,000 prisoners, including 1200 officers, almost all taken by Marlborough's wing, besides 34 pieces of cannon, 26 standards, and 90 colours; Eugene took 13 pieces. The killed and wounded were 14,000 more. But the total loss of the French and Bavarians, including those who deserted during their calamitous retreat through the Black Forest, was not less than 40,000 men,[14] a number greater than any which they sustained till the still more disastrous day of Waterloo.

This account of the battle, which is by far the best and most intelligible which has ever yet been published, makes it quite evident to what cause the overwhelming magnitude of this defeat to the French army was owing. The strength of the position consisted solely in the rivulets and marshy grounds in its front; when they were passed, the error of Marshal Tallard's disposition of his troops was at once apparent. The infantry was accumulated in useless numbers in the villages. Of the twenty-six battalions in Blenheim, twenty were useless, and could not get into action, while the long line of cavalry from thence to Oberglau was sustained only by a few battalions of foot, incapable of making any effective resistance. This was the more inexcusable, as the French, having sixteen battalions of infantry more than the Allies, should at no point have shown themselves inferior in foot soldiers to their opponents. When the curtain of horse which stretched from Blenheim to Oberglau was broken through and driven off the field, the 13,000 infantry accumulated in the former of these villages could not avoid falling into the enemy's hands; for they were pressed between Marlborough's victorious foot and horse on the one side, and the unfordable stream of the Danube on the other. But Marlborough, it is evident, evinced the capacity of a great general in the manner in which he surmounted these obstacles, and took advantage of these faulty dispositions; resolutely, in the first instance, overcoming the numerous impediments which opposed the passage of the rivulets, and then accumulating his horse and foot for a grand attack on the enemy's centre, which, besides destroying above half the troops assembled there, and driving thirty squadrons into the Danube, cut off, and isolated the powerful body of infantry now uselessly crowded together in Blenheim, and compelled them to surrender.

Immense were the results of this transcendent victory. The French army, lately so confident in its numbers and prowess, retreated "or rather fled," as Marlborough says, through the Black Forest; abandoning the Elector of Bavaria and all the fortresses on the Danube to their fate. In the deepest dejection, and the utmost disorder, they reached the Rhine, scarce twelve thousand strong, on the 25th August, and immediately began defiling over by the bridge of Strasburg. How different from the triumphant army, which with drums beating, and colours flying, had crossed at the same place

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[12] French – Bat. 82. Squad. 146. Allies – Bat. 66. Squad. 160. At 500 to a battalion, and 150 to a squadron, this gives a superiority of 5900 to the French.

[13] Marl., *Desp.* i. 402-409.

[14] Cardonnell, Desp. to Lord Harley, 25th Sept. 1704, *Desp.* i. 410. By intercepted letters it appeared the enemy admitted a loss of 40,000 men before they reached the Rhine. Marlborough to the Duke of Shrewsbury, 28th Aug. 1704, *Desp.* i. 439.

six weeks before! Marlborough, having detached part of his force to besiege Ulm, drew near with the bulk of his army to the Rhine, which he passed near Philipsburg on the 6th September, and soon after commenced the siege of Landau, on the French side; Prince Louis with 20,000 men forming the besieging force, and Eugene and Marlborough with 30,000 the covering army. Ulm surrendered on the 16th September, with 250 pieces of cannon, and 1200 barrels of powder, which gave the Allies a solid foundation on the Danube, and effectually crushed the power of the Elector of Bavaria, who, isolated now in the midst of his enemies, had no alternative but to abandon his dominions, and seek refuge in Brussels, where he arrived in the end of September. Meanwhile, as the siege of Landau was found to require more time than had been anticipated, owing to the extraordinary difficulties experienced in getting up supplies and forage for the troops; Marlborough repaired to Hanover and Berlin to stimulate the Prussian and Hanoverian cabinets to greater exertions in the common cause, and he succeeded in making arrangements for the addition of 8000 more Prussian troops to their valuable auxiliary force, to be added to the army of the Imperialists in Italy, which stood much in need of reinforcement. The Electress of Bavaria, who had been left Regent of that State in the absence of the Elector in Flanders, had now no resource left but submission; and a treaty was accordingly concluded in the beginning of November, by which she agreed to disband all her troops. Trarbach was taken in the end of December; the Hungarian insurrection was appeased; Landau capitulated in the beginning of the same month; a diversion which the enemy attempted on Trêves was defeated by Marlborough's activity and vigilance, and that city put in a sufficient posture of defence; and the campaign being now finished, that accomplished commander returned to the Hague, and London, to receive the honour due for his past services, and urge their respective cabinets to the efforts necessary to turn them to good account.

Thus by the operations of one single campaign was Bavaria crushed, Austria and Germany delivered. Marlborough's cross-march from Flanders to the Danube, had extricated the Imperialists from a state of the utmost peril, and elevated them at once to security, victory, and conquest. The decisive blow struck at Blenheim, resounded through every part of Europe; it at once destroyed the vast fabric of power which it had taken Louis XIV., aided by the talents of Turenne, and the genius of Vauban, so long to construct. Instead of proudly descending the valley of the Danube, and threatening Vienna, as Napoleon afterwards did in 1805 and 1809, the French were driven in the utmost disorder across the Rhine. The surrender of Trarbach and Landau gave the Allies a firm footing on the left bank of that river. The submission of Bavaria deprived the French of that great outwork, of which they have made such good use in their German wars, the Hungarian insurrection, deprived of the hoped-for aid from the armies on the Rhine, was pacified. Prussia was induced by this great triumph to co-operate in a more efficient manner in the common cause; the parsimony of the Dutch gave way before the tumult of success; and the empire, delivered from invasion, was preparing to carry its victorious arms into the heart of France. Such results require no comment; they speak for themselves, and deservedly place Marlborough in the very highest rank of military commanders. The campaigns of Napoleon exhibit no more decisive or glorious results.

Honours and emoluments of every description were showered on the English hero for this glorious success. He was created a prince of the Holy Roman empire,[15] and a tract of land in Germany erected into a principality in his favour. His reception at the courts of Berlin and Hanover resembled that of a sovereign prince; the acclamations of the people, in all the towns through which he passed,

[15] The holograph letter of the Emperor, announcing this honour, said, with equal truth and justice – "I am induced to assign to your highness a place among the princes of the empire, in order that it may universally appear how much I acknowledge myself and the empire to be indebted to the Queen of Great Britain, who sent her arms as far as Bavaria at a time when the affairs of the empire, by the defection of the Bavarians to the French, most needed that assistance and support: – And to your Grace, likewise, to whose prudence and courage, together with the bravery of the forces fighting under your command, the two victories lately indulged by Providence to the Allies are principally attributed, not only by the voice of fame, but by the general officers in my army who had their share in your labour and your glory." – The Emperor Leopold to Marlborough, *28th August 1704*. —*Desp.* i. 538.

rent the air; at the Hague his influence was such that he was regarded as the real Stadtholder. More substantial rewards awaited him in his own country. The munificence of the queen and the gratitude of Parliament conferred upon him the extensive honour and manor of Woodstock, long a royal palace, and once the scene of the loves of Henry II. and the fair Rosamond. By order of the Queen, not only was this noble estate settled on the duke and his heirs, but the royal comptroller commenced a magnificent palace for the duke on a scale worthy of his services and England's gratitude. From this origin the superb palace of Blenheim has taken its rise; which, although not built in the purest taste, or after the most approved models, remains, and will long remain, a splendid monument of a nation's gratitude, and of the genius of Vanbrugh.

Notwithstanding the invaluable services thus rendered by Marlborough, both to the Emperor of Germany and the Queen of England, he was far from experiencing from either potentate that liberal support for the future prosecution of the war, which the inestimable opportunity now placed in their hands, and the formidable power still at the disposal of the enemy so loudly required. As usual, the English Parliament were exceedingly backward in voting supplies either of men or money; nor was the cabinet of Vienna inclined to be more liberal in its exertions. Though the House of Commons agreed to give £4,670,000 for the service of the ensuing year; yet the land forces voted were only 40,000 men, although the population of Great Britain and Ireland could not be at that period under ten millions, while France, with about twenty millions, had above two hundred thousand under arms. It is this excessive and invariable reluctance of the English Parliament ever to make those efforts at the commencement of a war, which are necessary to turn to a good account the inherent bravery of its soldiers and frequent skill of its commanders, that is the cause of the long duration of our Continental wars, and of three-fourths of the national debt which now oppresses the empire, and, in its ultimate results, will endanger its existence. The national forces are, by the cry for economy and reduction which invariably is raised in peace, reduced to so low an ebb, that it is only by successive additions, made in many different years, that it can be raised up to any thing like the amount requisite for successful operations. Thus disaster generally occurs in the commencement of every war; or if, by the genius of any extraordinary commander, as by that of Marlborough, unlooked-for success is achieved in the outset, the nation is unable to follow it up; the war languishes for want of the requisite support; the enemy gets time to recover from his consternation; his danger stimulates him to greater exertions; and many long years of warfare, deeply checkered with disaster, and attended with an enormous expense, are required to obviate the effects of previous undue pacific reduction.

How bitterly Marlborough felt this want of support, on the part of the cabinets both of London and Vienna, which prevented him from following up the victory of Blenheim with the decisive operations against France which he would otherwise have undoubtedly commenced, is proved by various parts of his correspondence. On the 16th of December 1704, he wrote to Mr Secretary Harley – "I am sorry to see nothing has been offered yet, *nor any care taken by Parliament for recruiting the army*. I mean chiefly the foot. It is of that consequence for an early campaign, that without it *we may run the hazard of losing, in a great measure, the fruits of the last*; and therefore, pray leave to recommend it to you to advise with your friends, if any proper method can be thought of, that may be laid before the House immediately, without waiting my arrival."[16] Nor was the cabinet of Vienna, notwithstanding the imminent danger they had recently run, more active in making the necessary efforts to repair the losses of the campaign – "You cannot," says Marlborough, "say more to us of the *supine negligence of the Court of Vienna*, with reference to your affairs, *than we are sensible of every where else*; and certainly if the Duke of Savoy's good conduct and bravery at Verue had not reduced the French to a very low ebb, the game must have been over before any help could come to you."[17] It is ever thus, especially with states such as Great Britain, in which the democratic element is so powerful

[16] Marlborough to Mr Secretary Harley, 16th Dec. 1704. —*Desp.* i. 556.

[17] Marlborough to Mr Hill at Turin, 6th Feb. 1705. —*Desp.* i. 591.

as to imprint upon the measures of government that disregard of the future, and aversion to present efforts or burdens, which is the invariable characteristic of the bulk of mankind. If Marlborough had been adequately supported and strengthened after the decisive blow struck at Blenheim; that is, if the governments of Vienna and London, with that of the Hague, had by a great and timely effort doubled his effective force when the French were broken and disheartened by defeat, he would have marched to Paris in the next campaign, and dictated peace to the *Grand Monarque* in his gorgeous halls of Versailles. It was short-sighted economy which entailed upon the nations the costs and burdens of the next ten years of the War of the Succession, as it did the still greater costs and burdens of the Revolutionary War, after the still more decisive success of the Allies in the summer of 1793, when the iron frontier of the Netherlands was entirely broken through, and their advanced posts, without any force to oppose them, were within an hundred and sixty miles of Paris.

This parsimony of the Allied governments, and their invincible repugnance to the efforts and sacrifices which could alone bring, and certainly would have brought, the war to an early and glorious issue, is the cause of the subsequent conversion of the war into one of blockades and sieges, and of its being transferred to Flanders, where its progress was necessarily slow, and cost enormous, from the vast number of strongholds which required to be reduced at every stage of the Allied advance. It was said at the time, that in attacking Flanders in that quarter, Marlborough took the bull by the horns; that France on the side of the Rhine was far more vulnerable, and that the war was fixed in Flanders, in order by protracting it to augment the profits of the generals employed. Subsequent writers, not reflecting on the difference of the circumstances, have observed the successful issue of the invasions of France from Switzerland and the Upper Rhine in 1814, and Flanders and the Lower Rhine in 1815, and concluded that a similar result would have attended a like bold invasion under Marlborough and Eugene. There never was a greater mistake. The great object of the war was to wrest Flanders from France; when the lilied standard floated on Brussels and Antwerp, the United Provinces were constantly in danger of being swallowed up, and there was no security for the independence either of England, Holland, or any of the German States. If Marlborough and Eugene had had two hundred thousand effective men at their disposal, as Wellington and Blucher had in 1815, or three hundred thousand, as Schwartzenberg and Blucher had in 1814, they would doubtless have left half their force behind them to blockade the fortresses, and with the other half marched direct to Paris. But as they had never had more than eighty thousand on their muster-rolls, and could not bring at any time more than sixty thousand effective men into the field, this bold and decisive course was impossible. The French army in their front was rarely inferior to theirs, often superior; and how was it possible in these circumstances to adventure on the perilous course of pushing on into the heart of the enemy's territory, leaving the frontier fortresses, yet unsubdued, in their rear? The disastrous issue of the Blenheim campaign to the French arms, even when supported by the friendly arms and all the fortresses of Bavaria, in the preceding year, had shown what was the danger of such a course. The still more calamitous issue of the Moscow campaign to the army of Napoleon, demonstrated that even the greatest military talents, and most enormous accumulation of military force, affords no security against the incalculable danger of an undue advance beyond the base of military operations. The greatest generals of the last age, fruitful beyond all others in military talent, have acted on those principles, whenever they had not an overwhelming superiority of forces at their command. Wellington never invaded Spain till he was master of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajos; nor France till he had subdued St Sebastian and Pampeluna. The first use which Napoleon made of his victories at Montenotte and Dego was to compel the Court of Turin to surrender all their fortresses in Piedmont; of the victory of Marengo, to force the Imperialists to abandon the whole strongholds of Lombardy as far as the Adige. The possession of the single fortress of Mantua in 1796, enabled the Austrians to stem the flood of Napoleon's victories, and gain time to assemble four different armies for the defence of the monarchy. The case of half a million of men, flushed by victory, and led by able and experienced leaders assailing a single state, is the exception, not the rule.

Circumstances, therefore, of paramount importance and irresistible force, compelled Marlborough to fix the war in Flanders, and convert it into one of sieges and blockades. In entering upon such a system of hostility, sure, and comparatively free from risk, but slow and extremely costly, the alliance ran the greatest risk of being shipwrecked on the numerous discords, jealousies, and separate interests, which, in almost every instance recorded in history, have proved fatal to a great confederacy, if it does not obtain decisive success at the outset, before these seeds of division have had time to come to maturity. With what admirable skill and incomparable address Marlborough kept together the unwieldy alliance will hereafter appear. Never was a man so qualified by nature for such a task. He was courtesy and grace personified. It was a common saying at the time, that neither man nor woman could resist him. "Of all the men I ever knew," says no common man, himself a perfect master of the elegances he so much admired, "the late Duke of Marlborough possessed the graces in the highest degree, not to say engrossed them. Indeed he got the most by them, and contrary to the custom of profound historians, who always assign deep causes for great events, I ascribe the better half of the Duke of Marlborough's greatness to those graces. He had no brightness, nothing shining in his genius. He had most undoubtedly an excellent plain understanding, and sound judgment. But these qualities alone would probably have never raised him higher than they found him, which was page to James the Second's queen. But there the grace protected and promoted him. His figure was beautiful, but his manner was irresistible, either by man or woman. It was by this engaging, graceful manner, that he was enabled, during all his war, to connect the various and jarring powers of the Grand Alliance, and to carry them on to the main object of the war, notwithstanding their private and separate views, jealousies, and wrongheadedness. Whatever court he went to (and he was often obliged to go to restive and refractory ones) he brought them into his measures. The pensionary Heinsius, who had governed the United Provinces for forty years, was absolutely governed by him. He was always cool, and nobody ever observed the least variation in his countenance; he could refuse more gracefully than others could grant, and those who went from him the most dissatisfied as to the substance of their business, were yet charmed by his manner, and, as it were, comforted by it."[18]

[18] *Lord Chesterfield's Letters*, Lord Mahon's edition, i. 221-222.

PÚSHKIN, THE RUSSIAN POET

No. II

Specimens of his Lyrics

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL RUSSIAN, BY THOMAS B. SHAW, B.A. OF CAMBRIDGE, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE IMPERIAL ALEXANDER LYCEUM, TRANSLATOR OF "THE HERETIC,"&C. &C.

In offering to the public the following specimens of Púshkin's poetry in an English dress, the translator considers it part of his duty to make a few remarks. The number and extent of these observations, he will, of course, confine within the narrowest limits consistent with his important duty of making his countrymen acquainted with the style and character of Russia's greatest poet; a duty which he would certainly betray, were he to omit to explain the chief points indispensable for the true understanding, not only of the extracts which he has selected as a sample of his author's productions, but of the general tone and character of those productions, viewed as a whole.

The translator wishes it therefore to be distinctly understood that he by no means intends to offer, in the character of a complete poetical portrait, the few pieces contained in these pages, but rather as an attempt, however imperfect, to daguerreotype – by means of the most faithful translation consistent with ease —*one* of the various expressions of Púshkin's literary physiognomy; to represent one phase of his developement.

That physiognomy is a very flexible and a varying one; Púshkin (considered only as a *poet*) must be allowed to have attained very high eminence in various walks of his sublime art; his works are very numerous, and as diverse in their form as in their spirit; he is sometimes a romantic, sometimes a legendary, sometimes an epic, sometimes a satiric, and sometimes a dramatic poet; – in most, if not in all, of these various lines he has attained the highest eminence as yet recognised by his countrymen; and, consequently, whatever impression may be made upon our readers by the present essay at a transfusion of his works into the English language, will be necessarily a very imperfect one. In the prosecution of the arduous but not unprofitable enterprise which the translator set before himself three years ago – viz. the communication to his countrymen of some true ideas of the scope and peculiar character of Russian literature – he met with so much discouragement in the unfavourable predictions of such of his friends as he consulted with respect to the feasibility of his project, that he may be excused for some degree of timidity in offering the results of his labours to an English public. So great, indeed, was that timidity, that not even the very flattering reception given to his two first attempts at prose translation, has entirely succeeded in destroying it; and he prefers, on the present occasion, to run the risk of giving only a partial and imperfect reflection of Púshkin's intellectual features, to the danger that might attend a more ambitious and elaborate version of any of the poet's longer works.

Púshkin is here presented solely in his *lyrical* character; and, it is trusted, that, in the selection of the compositions to be translated – selections made from a very large number of highly meritorious works – due attention has been paid not only to the intrinsic beauty and merit of the pieces chosen, but also to the important consideration which renders indispensable (in cases where we find an *embarras de richesses*, and where the merit is equal) the adoption of such specimens as would possess the greatest degree of novelty for an English reader.

The task of translating all Púshkin's poetry is certainly too dignified a one, not to excite our ambition; and it is meditated, in the event of the accompanying versions finding in England a degree of approbation sufficiently marked to indicate a desire for more specimens, to extend our present labours so far, as to admit passages of the most remarkable merit from Púshkin's longer works; and, perhaps, even complete versions of some of the more celebrated. Should, therefore, the British public give the *fiat* of its approbation, we would still further contribute to its knowledge of the great Russian author, by publishing, for example, some of the more remarkable *places* in the poem of "Evgénii Oniégin," the charming "Gypsies," scenes and passages from the tragedy of "Bóris Godunóff," the "Prisoner of the Caucasus," "Mazépa," &c. &c.

With respect to the present or *lyrical* specimens, we shall take the liberty to make a few remarks, having reference to the principles which have governed the translator in the execution of the versions; and we shall afterwards preface each poem with a few words of notice, such as may appear to be rendered necessary either by the subject or by the form of the composition itself.

Of the poetical merit of these translations, considered as English poems, their writer has no very exalted idea; of their *faithfulness as versions*, on the contrary, he has so deep a conviction, that he regrets exceedingly the fact, that the universal ignorance prevailing in England of the Russian language, will prevent the possibility of that important merit – strict fidelity – being tested by the British reader. Let the indulgent, therefore, remember, if we have in any case left an air of stiffness and constraint but too perceptible in our work, that this fault is to be considered as a sacrifice of grace at the altar of truth. It would have been not only possible, but easy, to have spun a collection of easy rhymes, bearing a general resemblance to the vigorous and passionate poetry of Púshkin; but this would not have been a *translation*, and a translation it was our object to produce. Bowring's *Russian Anthology* (not to speak of his other volumes of translated poetry) is a melancholy example of the danger of this attractive but fatal system; while the names of Cary, of Hay, and of Merivale, will remain as a bright encouragement to those who have sufficient strength of mind to prefer the "strait and narrow way" of masterly *translation*, to the "flowery paths of dalliance" so often trodden by the *paraphraser*.

In all cases, the metre of the original, the musical movement and modulation, has, as far as the translator's ear enabled him to judge, been followed with minute exactness, and at no inconsiderable expense, in some cases, of time and labour. It would be superfluous, therefore, to state, that the number of lines in the English version is always the same as in the original. It has been our study, wherever the differences in the structure of the two languages would permit, to include the same thoughts in the same number of lines. There is also a peculiarity of the Russian language which frequently rendered our task still more arduous; and the conquest of this difficulty has, we trust, conferred upon us the right to speak of our triumph without incurring the charge of vanity. We allude to the great abundance in the Russian of double terminations, and the consequent recurrence of double rhymes, a peculiarity common also to the Italian and Spanish versification, and one which certainly communicates to the versification of those countries a character so marked and peculiar, that no translator would be justified in neglecting it. As it would be impossible, without the use of Russian types, to give our readers an example of this from the writings of Púshkin, and as they would be unable to pronounce such a quotation even if they saw it, we will give an illustration of what we mean from the Spanish and the Italian.

The first is from the fourth book of the *Galatea* of Cervantes —

"Venga á mirar á la pastora mia
Quien quisiere contar de gente en gente
Que vió otro sol, que daba luz al dia
Mas claro, que el que sale del oriente," &c.;

and the second from Chiabrera's sublime *Ode on the Siege of Vienna*—

"E fino a quanto inulti
Sian, Signore, i tuoi servi? E fino a quanto
Dei barbarici insulti
Orgogliosa n'andrà l'empia baldanza?
Dov'è, dov'è, gran Dio, l'antico vanto
Di tua alta possanza?" &c. &c.

In the two passages here quoted, it will be observed that all the lines end with two syllables, in both of which the rhyme is engaged; and an English version of the above verses, however faithful in other respects, which should omit to use the same species of double termination, and content itself with the monosyllable rhyme, would indubitably lose some of the harmony of the original. These double rhymes are far from abundant in our monosyllabic language; but we venture to affirm, that their conscientious employment would be found so valuable, as to amply repay the labour and difficulty attending their search.

We trust that our readers will pardon the apparent technicality of these remarks, for the sake of the consideration which induced us to make them. In all translation, even in the best, there is so great a loss of spirit and harmony, that the conscientious labourer in this most difficult and ungrateful art, should never neglect even the most trifling precaution that tends to hinder a still further depreciation of the gold of his original; not to mention the principle, that whatever it is worth our while to do at all, it is assuredly worth our while to do as well as we can.

The first specimen of Púshkin's lyric productions which we shall present to our countrymen, "done into English," as Jacob Tonson was wont to phrase it, "by an eminent hand," is a production considered by the poet's critics to possess the very highest degree of merit in its peculiar style. We have mentioned some details respecting the nature and history of the Imperial Lyceum of Tsarskoë Seló, in which Púshkin was educated, and we have described the peculiar intensity of feeling with which all who quitted its walls looked back upon the happy days they had spent within them, and the singular ardour and permanency of the friendships contracted beneath its roof. On the anniversary of the foundation (by the Emperor Alexander) of the institution, it is customary for all the "old Lyceans" to dine together, in the same way as the Eton, Harrow, or Rugby men are accustomed to unite once a-year in honour of their school. On many of these occasions Púshkin contributed to the due celebration of the event by producing poems of various lengths, and different degrees of merit; we give here the best of these. It was written during the poet's residence in the government of Pskoff, and will be found, we think, a most beautiful and touching embodiment of such feelings as would be suggested in the mind of one obliged to be absent from a ceremony of the nature in question. Of the comrades whose names Púshkin has immortalized in these lines, it is only necessary to specify that the first, Korsákoff, distinguished among his youthful comrades for his musical talents, met with an early death in Italy; a circumstance to which the poet has touchingly alluded. Matiúshkin is now an admiral of distinction, and is commanding the Russian squadron in the Black Sea. Of the two whom he mentions as having passed the anniversary described in this poem (October 19, 1825) in his company, the first was Pústchin, since dead, and the second the Prince Gortchakóff, whom he met by accident, travelling in the neighbourhood of his (the poet's) seclusion. Our readers cannot fail, we think, to be struck with the beautiful passage consecrated to his friendship with Délvig; and the only other personal allusion which seems to stand in need of explanation, is that indicated by the name Wilhelm, towards the end of the poem. This is the Christian name of his friend Küchelbecher, since dead, and whose family name was hardly harmonious enough to enter Púshkin's line, and was therefore omitted on the Horatian principle – "versu quod dicere nolim." We now hasten to present the lines.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.