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THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE OF 1788.¹

BY OSCAR BROWNING, M.A., F.R.HIST.SOC.

(Read Dec. 1883.)

WILLIAM PITT the younger became prime minister in December 1783, just at the moment when a satisfactory peace had concluded a long and disastrous war. The struggle with the American colonies had left England without allies in Europe. The cause of the revolted patriots had been supported first by France, then by Spain, and lastly by Holland, while the armed neutrality of 1780, originated by Russia perhaps at the instigation of Frederick the Great, had been joined by most of the European powers. This was a direct defiance of the naval supremacy of England, made at a time when the strength of the country was scarcely sufficient to support its claims. When peace was concluded England swept the field of Europe to find an ally.

Russia, governed by Catherine II., a vigorous and enlightened sovereign, was mainly interested in extending her dominions, either to the south at the expense of Turkey, to the north-west at the expense of Sweden, or to the west at the expense of Poland. Catherine found a natural ally in Joseph II. of Austria, a prince who, like herself, penetrated with the ideal views of French philosophers, believed that mankind was to be reformed by edicts, and civilisation hastened by the imperious orders of an absolute will. Besides a desire to depress the influence of the nobility and the

¹ The authorities for this paper are the published despatches of Lord Malmesbury and Lord Auckland, the Leeds papers in the British Museum, and the despatches of Sir James Harris and other ministers preserved in the Record Office

Church, which was shared by many enlightened statesmen of that age, Joseph was anxious to round off the scattered dominions of Austria by exchanging the Netherlands for Bavaria, a project to which he clung with remarkable tenacity. This was undoubtedly a wise and statesmanlike design. Austria had never been able to consolidate her medley of provinces into a well-defined kingdom. Joseph was quite alive to the danger of being driven out of Germany by the growth of Prussia, and succeeding history has justified his prescience. If Bavaria were added to Austria, the Emperor would be left in his German possessions, the danger of a third German power to hold the balance between the two great rivals would be less, and the kingdom of Burgundy would have anticipated the kingdom of Belgium by fifty years. The plan, however good in itself, could not fail to rouse the jealousy of France, who preferred to see the flat plains of the Netherlands lie open to her as a ready prey, and who dreaded the development of commercial activity in Antwerp. The very excellence of the scheme made it hateful to Frederick, that sly and cynical observer of all political movements. To prevent it he called into existence the League of Princes.

Besides this great design wider projects were continually springing up in Joseph's seething brain. Conscious of his own rectitude and of the benefits of his rule, he cared little for other considerations. He showed as reckless a disregard of vested rights, of the sentiment of nationalities or populations, of the accepted public law of Europe, as Frederick had when he invaded Silesia, or as Napoleon was to show when he compensated plundered monarchs by the spoil of monarchs whom he was yet to plunder. A clear-sighted statesman would have seen that Austria and Russia were at this time the main dangers to the peace of Europe. Their common interests drew them together as Napoleon and Alexander were drawn together in the raft on the river Niemen. But it was the common interest of Europe to watch them narrowly and to cross their ambitious plans.

Frederick the Great had insulted Catherine as a woman, and although they had much in common as sovereigns, Catherine never forgot or forgave the insult. The reports of our ambassador at St. Petersburg are full of evidence of her ill-feeling towards him, and tell us how she rejoiced at his death. The diplomacy of Europe had no secrets for Frederick, yet he confined himself to the interests of his country. He was ready to divide Poland with Russia in order to increase his own dominions and to lure Russia from conquest in the East. He had seen through the character of Joseph II. in his first interview with him ; and while he probably foresaw that ultimate failure of the Emperor's plans which Joseph desired might be written on his grave, he did not think it worth while to oppose him actively until the Bavarian exchange appeared imminent.

While such was the condition of Russia, Austria, and Prussia, France was at this time governed by one of the most peaceful and benevolent sovereigns who ever swayed her sceptre, and by a well-meaning and straightforward minister. History will at some time do justice to the qualities of Louis XVI. and to the industrious honesty of Vergennes. It is true that they had been misled into taking the part of America against us, an action fatal in its results to the French monarchy. But they were now sincerely desirous of peace and of the development of French commerce. In fact, the condition of France was desperate. In five years the great Revolution was to burst forth which destroyed constitution, priests, nobles, and king. Little aware of the chasm on which their power was built, the rulers of France still knew that the country required peace, and that material prosperity should be their first care. The French navy had suffered severely during the war, French colonies had been taken by the English and not restored at the peace. An Indian empire, which France regarded with pride and hope as a nucleus of wealth and honour, was destroyed, and the kernel of a British empire planted in its stead. Could a statesman have foreseen what no statesman could then fathom, the utter rottenness of

French government and society, he would have left her to her own devices, feeling sure that she could not endanger the peace of Europe. It might have been wiser perhaps to have assisted her to develop her strength, in order that she might the better cope with those devastating forces which a few years later menaced the civilised world.

It was natural that Louis and Vergennes should attach great importance to the French alliance with Holland. The Dutch had fought by their side against the English; they were close neighbours; they were the second maritime power of Europe; they had the instinct of successful trade, and especially of trade with the East. France and Holland could each give something which the other lacked. United they would present the appearance of a maritime commercial power backed by the prestige of a military nation which had once been great. The other ally of France was Austria, joined to France by treaty for nearly thirty years and now joined by marriage. This alliance, which dates from the beginning of the Seven Years' War, was the masterpiece of Kaunitz. It reconciled powers which the tradition of Europe had regarded as hereditary enemies, to oppose them to Prussia, who had ventured to beard the majesty of the Empire. It was not likely that Kaunitz would, so long as he was minister, consent to the undoing of a work which he regarded as the glory of his life. Nor was it probable that Marie Antoinette, who had great political influence, would allow a rupture with her tenderest associations. Yet the Franco-Austrian alliance was of little use to France; it damaged the Court in the eyes of the people and it did not protect or save it in the hour of danger. It was a drag rather than otherwise on the designs of Joseph. His plans for the exchange of Bavaria, for opening the Scheldt, were directly opposed to French interests, and his restless and unquiet ambition must have been a constant source of anxiety to his peaceful allies. The interests of France and Austria were as naturally opposed to each other as those of Austria and Russia were united. Thus we see

France continually expostulating with the Emperor, employing in turn a more or less decided tone, never sympathetic and often hostile. Joseph was not without suspicion of the internal weakness of France. He cared little for the cumbersome paraphernalia and deep-seated abuses of the *ancien régime*, while the good sense and good government of Englishmen appealed powerfully to his sympathies.

It follows from this review of the condition of Europe in 1784 that, with the exception of Prussia, there was no power which England had less reason to fear than France. If a French and English alliance was outside the range of practical politics, yet a benevolent neutrality was practical and desirable ; on the other hand, Austria and Russia were the true disturbers of the peace of Europe. The one thing which kept the ambition of Joseph within bounds was his close connection with France ; yet we find that during the first year of Pitt's accession to office the whole of our suspicion is directed against France ; not a movement takes place which we do not attribute to her sinister designs. In vain Catherine and Kaunitz assure us that we are mistaken ; their denial of French conspiracy only suggests doubts of their own sincerity towards us. Not only this, but it is repeated again and again that the main object of British diplomacy should be to dissolve the unnatural alliance between France and Austria. If time permitted I could multiply instances of this unreasoning suspicion drawn from the Foreign Office papers in the Record Office : one will suffice. On September 7, 1784, Lord Carmarthen writes to Sir R. Murray Keith, ambassador at Vienna, that in his opinion nothing is to be expected from Kaunitz, and that Keith is to seek an interview with Joseph himself. He proceeds : ' Were it possible by any means to obtain the confidence of the Emperor on the general state of European politics, much surely might be done. Some assurances of eventual assistance, communicated with caution and observed with secrecy, might gratify the natural reserve of his character at the same time they flatter his ambition ; *and let the latter passion be as prevalent in his mind as the most*

bitter of his enemies wishes to represent it, I can scarcely conceive a length to which it would carry him in the pursuit of which it would not be our interest to second his views on condition of effectually rendering the House of Austria what she ought to be, the formidable rival of the House of Bourbon.' This extraordinary statement from an English minister was written just after Joseph had declared the Scheldt open to navigation in defiance of treaties and to the amazement and indignation of the rest of Europe.

In this juncture of affairs a course of diplomatic action was begun which changed Holland from the attitude of a doubtful friend, or even of an enemy, to a close ally, and which built up the fabric of an alliance between these two maritime powers and Prussia, which for a short time gave the law to Europe and checked the ever-swelling ambition of Austria and Russia just as they seemed to have the objects of their desire within their grasp. As soon as peace was signed between England and Holland it became necessary that ministers should be exchanged between the two Courts. Sir James Harris, afterwards created Lord Malmesbury, was chosen for this post by Fox and the Duke of Portland, and after their dismissal from power the appointment was confirmed by Pitt and Lord Carmarthen. Sir James Harris accepted the post with the full approbation of his former friends. He was a bright, versatile, and witty man; he had served with distinction both in Spain and Russia, and he was to continue in employments which have handed down his name as one of the most brilliant and successful of English diplomatists.

In order to make his course of action clear it will be necessary to give some account of the condition of Holland at this time. The seven provinces formed a union of the loosest kind. The province of Holland had the pre-eminence, and in times of danger the other provinces were ready to concede to her a prerogative vote. But there was nothing in the Dutch constitution to make this necessary, nor did occasion for it often occur. Each State was free to act as it pleased. Confederate governments are only held together by some definite power being reserved for the central authority. In most

cases the care of posts and telegraphs, of carriage, of the higher justice, and of peace and war, is surrendered by the subordinate States. In Holland no constitution of this kind existed. It was possible for the separate States to enter into alliances entirely independent of the rest. Liberty and diversity of action were valued before unity and efficiency. The States were generally under a government of an aristocracy of merchants; the main object of their rulers was to preserve their own power and to make as much money as possible by trade. They found that an alliance with France served both these purposes; France supported them against the English, who were their great rivals in commerce, aided their pretensions to Eastern trade, and by judicious influence kept the provinces back from too close a union. The party who wished for the maintenance of this loose confederacy and of the French alliance called themselves the Patriots, as being depositories of the best traditions of Dutch freedom. Opposed to these was the party of the Stadtholder, a name once given to the viceroy of the King of Spain, and since the revolution to an officer chosen by each separate province and invested with the command of the army and the fleet. Since the days of William the Silent the Stadtholderate had been hereditary in the House of Orange, although for long periods the office had been altogether suspended. The Patriots were strongest in the province of Holland, and especially in the town of Amsterdam. The party of the Prince, as it was called, rested on the attachment of the nobles, the common people, and the provinces of Zeeland and Guelderland. As the Patriots were devoted to France, so were the Prince's party to England. But at this time the English party was weak and of no reputation. William V. of Orange was a man of feeble character, not likely to regain what he had lost nor to keep what he had gained. But his high-spirited wife made up for his deficiencies. Frederica Wilhelmina of Prussia, niece of Frederick the Great, had a stout heart to defend the interests of her family and blue pleading eyes which Harris sometimes confessed to be dangerous.

When Harris arrived in Holland the affairs of the country were in a serious crisis. The Emperor Joseph had, as we have seen, determined to open the river Scheldt to commerce, a course to which the Dutch were strongly opposed. He had also demanded the cession of the town of Maestricht, to which he imagined that he had some claim. Harris tells Carmarthen in his first despatch (December 7, 1784) that France is determining to support the country against the Emperor's claims—had offered one of her best generals and had given leave to raise troops in France. Besides verbal orders, Harris had received two other papers for his guidance, one a memorandum dated in October, the other formal instructions dated November 21. In the first of these he was told what attitude he was to adopt towards the different parties in the Republic. To the Patriots he was to give general assurances of friendship and goodwill from England, but lament their present attitude towards this country. The more moderate men among the Republicans he was to warn that French influence would be fatal to their constitution and liberties, and that their Republic would become little better than a province in the hands of France. The real friends of England, and those entitled to our confidence, he was to recommend to cultivate friendship with the King of Prussia, who ought, in conjunction with England, to be the ally of the United Provinces. They were to be pressed also to co-operate with England in destroying the alliance between France and Austria. In his regular instructions Sir James Harris was ordered to assure the Prince of Orange of our esteem, to find out who are friends to England, to urge the country to return to its ancient connection with us, to notice any treaty with the Court of France, to see what assistance Holland is likely to receive from France or Prussia in her dispute with the Emperor. To these were added two secret instructions. Our ambassador was to discover if there were any who, while supporting the person or the office of the Stadtholder, were still anxious for the French alliance, and to sound well-

disposed persons as to the chance of surmounting the present strength of the Patriot party. In no case was the name or authority of the King of England to be placed in jeopardy.

Harris arrived at the Hague December 6, 1784. His first impressions are very dismal. He says in a private letter, preserved in the British Museum, that there is no chance of doing any good, or any occasion for doing more harm than they are doing themselves. His mission, therefore, will be one of little action. The Prince of Orange told him that his happy days were over, and that he looked forward to nothing for himself and his children except misery and disgrace. He finds that the English party is composed of a set of men dejected, oppressed, and divided amongst themselves. Something might be done with a good leader, but the Prince of Orange was unfit for the post. The Princess might do something by inducing the Emperor to restore the power of the Stadtholder at the price of opening the Scheldt. If this cannot be done it is better that Holland should sink into a state of entire insignificance. In the meantime the Emperor pressed his claims with vigour. Two Austrian ships were ordered to proceed down the Scheldt and to reply if they were fired upon. Joseph demanded a large compensation from the Dutch for the relinquishment of his supposed rights to the town of Maestricht. This produced a schism between the views of France and Prussia. While the French Court urged the Dutch to submit to the Emperor's claims, perhaps from desire to avoid a war, Prussia urged them to resist. Frederick was still more eager to withstand the ambition of Joseph from the news of the contemplated Bavarian exchange, which now became public. These events assisted the views of England in Holland. The peasants, called upon by the Patriots to fight against the Emperor, decked themselves with Orange colours and declared for the Stadtholder. Had the Prince of Orange been less sluggish, the crisis might have been turned to greater advantage. Harris certainly loses no opportunity of effecting his object. He urges Ewart, our representative at Berlin, to take action with the King of Prussia through

Herzberg or Görz, on the ground that, as the ministers at home are engrossed with the House of Commons, any good that is ever done on the Continent must be effected by the King's ministers abroad and not by those about his person. He proposes an alliance between England, Prussia, and Holland to check that between France, Austria, and Russia. Frederick suggests in answer that England should in the electorate of Hanover join the Fürstenbund, a suggestion which was readily adopted.

During the spring and summer of 1785 Harris was in England, and was able to communicate with the ministers in person. He found them evidently friendly to an alliance with Prussia, but Frederick was too old and cautious to accept the offer. During his absence the French carried on a mediation between the Dutch and the Emperor, which eventually resulted in their paying the Emperor a large sum of money, which the French in great part contributed as a loan. Harris used all the arts of obstruction which the Dutch constitution admitted of to prevent a *rapprochement* between France and Holland, but in vain. Harris, on returning to the Hague, found the Prince of Orange absent. He saw a great deal of the Princess, and urged her to use all her influence with her uncle, the King of Prussia; but she could get nothing out of him, and on September 15 the Prince and Princess of Orange left the Hague, the Princess for Friesland, the Prince for Breda. The night before their departure Harris had a long and affecting interview with the Princess. She felt that she was leaving the Hague never to return; in a few days the Prince would be deprived of every remnant of authority. She scarcely regretted the altered prospects of her children; they were too young to know ambition, and would, she trusted, be happier in a private station. M. de Maillebois, the French general, had suggested that she should give up the Prince and be Stadtholder in his place. This, which her uncle Frederick would have approved of, she rejected with disdain, and declared that she would never desert her husband. 'I may,' she said, 'wish at times that the Prince possessed many qualities which

he has not, and that he could be divested of several he has ; but these feelings I conceal in my own heart, and they neither have nor ever shall influence my conduct. I am bound to share his fate, let it be what it may, and I trust in God to be enabled to meet it with firmness and resignation.' The Princess arrived in Friesland the following day, and landed amidst the acclamations of the people, who crowded on the shore to receive her.

There were at this time two parties in the English Cabinet, one in favour of a spirited foreign policy, the other of peace and retrenchment. Whilst Carmarthen was engaged in the useless attempt to detach Austria from France, Pitt was giving the strength of his mind to the improvement of our finances. He writes to Harris in October 1785 : ' The general state of our revenue is improving daily. We are, I believe, already in possession of a million surplus beyond all our probable annual expenses, and shall, if the same course of prosperity continues, find ourselves very different in the eyes of Europe from what we have been for some time.' The end of 1785 was marked by the signature of the treaty of alliance between Holland and France. England protested against it, but was not prepared to go to war without the active support of Prussia. During the first months of 1786 France was gaining influence in the States, and the Stadtholder was subject to renewed insults and attacks. Zealand remained true to England. By the mouth of her pensionary Vanderspiegel she offered to detach herself from the rest of the confederation and join England, if England would accept the offer ; but that, of course, could not be done without the risk of war. The Cabinet went so far as to promise the Prince of Orange material support if he would place himself at the head of his party. Vanderspiegel was to give his best assistance on his side. A strong memorial was presented to the States-General, informing them that England was anxious for the maintenance of the ancient constitution of Holland and that she was aware of the overbearing ambition of France. Just as events were in the highest condition of tension they received

a new turn by the death of Frederick the Great. Lord Dalrymple writes from Berlin that on August 15 he fell into a kind of lethargy, from which he woke the next day and was able to dictate to his secretaries. The same torpor came on again, but at night he was able to speak distinctly. At midnight he was given over, and early in the morning of the 17th the closed gates of the palace announced that the King was dead.

The new King was of very different character. Lord Dalrymple describes him as being a very poor specimen of a king—tall, but undignified and ungraceful; honest, courageous, and sensible, but not refined or elevated in his ideas. His morality was far from good, and he was seriously in debt. At the same time he was well disposed towards England, and wished his daughter to marry the Prince of Wales. Prince Henri, on the other hand, Frederick's brother, was in favour of a French alliance. The first step of the new King was to send Count Görz to the Hague. He avowed to Harris his master's strong desire for an alliance with England, but this had no effect on the conduct of the States of Holland. They favoured the development of free corps throughout the country—an armed mob, as Harris calls them—and the Prince, feeling his life insecure, by the advice of Harris, surrounds himself with a guard. In September the States of Holland suspend the Stadtholder from his functions and rescind the Act of 1766, which gave him the power of military nominations. The Patriots held a meeting at the French ambassador's, where they discussed the propriety of declaring the Stadtholder an enemy of the Republic, depriving him of his office and declaring it no longer hereditary in his family. To add to the distress of Harris, England refused to accept Count Görz's proposal of a joint intervention; and the King of Prussia, finding action in favour of his sister harder than he had expected, recalled his ambassador and rebuked him for exceeding his instructions. Harris was reduced to a condition of despair. However erroneous were his ideas about the danger of French ambition, he must deserve credit for the instinct which convinced him that a most important battle

was being fought out in Holland, that the subjection of that country to France would isolate England in Europe and be a constant menace to our trade, whereas by alliance with Holland we could best hope to establish ourselves in Europe and form useful and permanent connections with other powers. As a last resource he wrote to Pitt himself, who had just concluded a commercial treaty with France. Pitt naturally dreaded anything which would plunge England into a war, and shrank from expenditure on objects which were not calculated to increase or develop the material resources of the country. Harris, in his letter to Pitt of November 28, gives a retrospect of his mission, points out the danger of the political direction of Holland belonging to the French, and asks that such measures may be taken that the friends which he has succeeded in gaining for England may not be abandoned by him. Pitt replies with great caution, but in language which was more satisfactory than Harris or Carmarthen expected. The latter says, in exultation, 'Now we have raised his attention to the important object in question, we must by all means endeavour to keep it up and not suffer Holland to be sacrificed either to lawn or cambric.' After another correspondence Harris was requested to state his views for information of the Cabinet, and did so in a full despatch. He showed that the republic might still be saved if England would provide funds. Months pass, and no step is taken. On May 1, 1787, he writes a more serious remonstrance. He details the efforts he has made to create an English and Stadtholderian party since his arrival in the country. He points out emphatically that foreign assistance is necessary, and that some great power must be found who may not only think it worth while to afford pecuniary supplies, but who may consider themselves as sufficiently interested in preserving the republic from becoming a French province to declare that if France should invade it the step will not be regarded with indifference. England is the only power that can take this position. May he come to London to confer with the Cabinet in person? His orders of recall

were despatched on May 8, and on the same day he informs his Government that the French are forming a camp of 30,000 men at Givet, and are preparing to interfere in force.

We have a full record of a Cabinet dinner at which Harris was present, held at Lord Chancellor Thurlow's on May 23. The Chancellor, the Duke of Richmond, and Lord Stafford were in favour of intervention. Pitt was more cautious; if we did anything we must be ready for war. Harris urged that France did not desire to fight *for* Holland, but *with* Holland against England; that she had neither an army, revenue, nor ministry; and that England would never find a more favourable moment for taking a high and becoming line. Pitt in reply lamented any interruption to the growth of affluence and prosperity in the country, and asked whether this was not increasing so fast as not to make her equal to resist any force France could collect for some years hence. The next day Pitt went minutely into the whole matter with Harris, and on the 25th a Cabinet minute was presented to the King advising pecuniary assistance to the Stadtholder to the amount of 20,000*l.*, advanced as loan or otherwise.

On the evening of the day following Harris's return to the Hague he met five of the Stadtholder's friends in a private room in the Old Palace. Each of them came by a different route, muffled up in his cloak. Sir James told them the result of his journey to England. He said (1) that the King of England granted the pecuniary assistance asked for, (2) that in case of an invasion from France England must be left to act for herself without giving a direct promise, but (3) if it were necessary for them to seek an asylum one would always be given them in England. A plan of action was agreed upon and M. Nagel communicated what had passed to the Court of the Prince at Nimuegen. Nagel returned, saying that the plan of action was adopted by the Prince and Princess, and that the Prince would put himself at the head of Van der Hop's army at Amersfort. This army was soon joined by English officers who volunteered for service, and every day grew in numbers. An event now occurred which

changed the whole situation of affairs. The Princess of Orange suddenly left Nimuegen and went to the camp at Amersfort. Soon after her arrival, on June 23, she sent a messenger to inform her friends who had met with such secrecy in the Old Palace that she was determined to come herself to the Hague and to place herself at the head of the Stadtholder's party. The Prince had given his consent and letters to the States-General and the States of Holland empowering her to act and negotiate as circumstances might demand. 'She asked for our advice,' Harris says, 'and we could not refuse our consent, but warned her of the danger she might incur.' On June 25 an express arrived, ordering a room to be prepared for her in the Palace on the 28th. However on the evening of that day she was stopped in the neighbourhood of Gouda by some free corps and carried under a strong guard to Schonhoven. She wrote an indignant letter to protest against her detention, and there was great danger of an outbreak at the Hague. The streets were patrolled by horse and foot soldiers, who dispersed the people. The States of Holland passed a resolution approving of her capture. On the morning of June 30 she was released and returned to Nimuegen. I cannot find whether Harris suggested this bold step or not, but it is difficult to believe that she would have acted without his advice, and we may, I think, regard this new departure as part of the *plan of action* suggested by her partisans.

The Princess wrote to her brother urging him to avenge the insult offered to her. He prepared immediately to march troops into Holland. I have no space to relate the efforts now made by the English Cabinet to prevent French interference, although I have examined the papers which have reference to it. No doubt France was pledged by treaty to support Holland in case of attack, and could not back out of her engagement without dishonour. But Montmorin, who had succeeded Vergennes, was not only sincerely desirous of peace but could not afford to go to war. There exists in the Record Office a despatch dated July 27, 1787,

which, from the erasures and the sentences contributed in autograph by the different ministers, shows the care with which it was drafted. We then contemplated mediation, but mediation to restore the Stadtholder. Meanwhile negotiations were going on with the Court of Potsdam, where there was a strong French party opposing the alliance with England. A letter of Pitt's to Eden, dated September 14, 1787, is most warlike in tone, and says that the French must, as things stand, give up their predominant influence in Holland or they must *fight for it*. A war between France and England was on the point of breaking out. Montmorin declared that there was a strong party in the French Cabinet in favour of intervention, and that many regarded a foreign war as the best remedy for the internal calamities which were advancing with fatal rapidity. A war between France and England in 1787, whatever its result, would certainly have changed the destinies of Europe. War in Holland was so imminent in August that Harris burned his cyphers and sent his important papers to England, as the troops levied by Holland were coming very near to the Hague. A convention between England and Prussia provided for a joint intervention in favour of the Stadtholder. Before this England prepared a fleet for the defence of Zealand and sent an English general to Germany to levy troops. The Cabinet minute for arming the fleet is dated September 15; a haughty message is sent to the French Government and a note to the Courts of Europe. On the same day the Prussian army entered Holland in three columns. All resistance immediately collapsed. The free corps were broken up; the States of Holland agreed to bring back the Stadtholder to the Hague with all the authority of 1747 and 1766. Harris wrote that he can scarcely believe in the reality of what has occurred; he had no conception of a success so rapid and so complete. It was now too late for France to intervene; if the French ambassador came to the Hague he must enter it with orange-coloured ribands or not at all. Five days later the Prince returned to his capital. A mile from the town the horses were taken from his carriage, and when he arrived at

the palace he was borne on the shoulders of the mob. He was invested with every privilege that had been taken from him. He ascribes his restoration solely to the friendship and support of England. Within a week he was joined by his noble-hearted wife, who was received with the same enthusiasm and promised every satisfaction. The States of Holland were induced to repudiate the intervention or mediation of France. On October 2 Mr. Grenville, who had been sent on a special mission to Paris, was able to write that France had laid aside all thought of active interference and that he considered the Dutch business to be at an end. On October 28 Montmorin was forced to sign a most humiliating declaration of disarmament, coupled with the statement that the intention of the King was not and never had been to interfere in the affairs of the United Provinces. It may be doubted whether it was sound policy to weaken by this unnecessary degradation a power which was too weak already to withstand the revolutionary flood which was soon to overwhelm Europe.

It would be tedious and unnecessary to follow the details of the negotiation of the treaty between England and Holland. Vanderspiegel, the warm friend of England and pensionary of Zealand, was now made Grand Pensionary of Holland. The Dutch were renowned for haggling about minute points, and the most difficult matter to arrange was the possession of Negapatam, a town on the Coromandel coast with a good harbour, which had been ceded to England at the peace. It, however, remained in the hands of England, and the definite treaty between England and Holland was signed on April 15, 1788. A treaty between Holland and Prussia was signed at Berlin on the same day and at the same hour. The treaty was communicated to the Court of Versailles, and was naturally not received with satisfaction. France declared that she did not intend to allow the treaty to pass unchallenged. She required an explanation of its tendency, and was not satisfied with it when given.

The treaty between England and Prussia still remained

to be concluded. The King of Prussia was to stay with his sister at Loo on June 11, and Harris was invited to meet him there. In view of this important negotiation he was summoned to England to receive direct instructions from the Ministry. He was the bearer of an autograph letter from George III. to the Princess saying how much he should desire an alliance with her brother in his capacity as king similar to that which already existed between them in his capacity as elector. The King mentioned the peace of Europe, and especially a settlement of the dispute between Russia and Turkey, as an object of the alliance. The history of the negotiation is curious and romantic. There was a strong French party at the Prussian Court, and the King, weak and vacillating, did not know how to make up his mind. The Princess told Harris that her brother was afraid of him, from his supposed leanings to Austria, and that he had a most difficult part to play; at the same time she promised her whole support. Among the King's attendants was a Colonel Stein, brother of the famous minister, who was reported to be in the interest of France and opposed to the English alliance. Harris had determined to see the King alone, and gave a hundred ducats to the servant who stood at the King's door, promising as much more if he would exclude Stein till the next morning. The bribe was successful, as Stein twice presented himself and was not allowed to enter.

Harris saw the King at seven in the morning on June 12. He went over everything which had passed between the two Courts since the signing of the convention of October 2, explaining anything which seemed to show a reluctance to contract an alliance with Prussia. The King said that he had always desired to see the Courts united, and that he did not see why this should not immediately be done. Harris offered the option of immediately signing a provisional treaty or postponing it for the purpose of concluding a general treaty on a broader basis, to which other powers might be invited to accede. The King asked for some hours of calm

consideration. The rest of the day was passed in every kind of amusement, and it was not till after midnight, while the brilliant company were dancing, that the King asked Harris to walk with him behind the pavilion in which the ball was being held, and told him that he had decided to conclude a provisional alliance at once, with an act of guarantee for Holland, and to consult other powers as to forming a more extensive connection in the future. Harris and Alvensleben had no secretaries. They spent the rest of the night in drawing up the treaty with the secret articles. At nine o'clock the next morning Harris was summoned to the King's closet; he had already seen the draft, and had only a trifling alteration to propose. The treaty was formally signed by Alvensleben and Harris in the presence of Vanderspiegel, and entitled the provisional treaty of Loo. Harris had triumphantly removed the King from the French influence which surrounded him, and left him in a state of complete devotion to the interests of England and under a full conviction of the fairness of our conduct towards him. This is one of the few instances where a minister has made a treaty directly with a foreign sovereign without the intervention of that sovereign's responsible advisers.

Thus was concluded the triple alliance of 1788—a very important event in the history of Europe, which, lost in the folds of the French Revolution, which broke out in the succeeding year, has received less attention than it deserves. For a time the three allied powers gave the law to Europe. It made peace between Austria and Turkey at Sistowo, between Russia and Poland at Werelå, and between Russia and the Porte at Jassy; it secured the Netherlands to Austria, and obviated a war between Spain and England in the dispute about Nootka Sound. So far it tended to quell the disorders of Europe, to curb the ambition of some powers, the revolutionary movements of others. It was powerless to conjure the terrible doom which hung over the devoted head of France. The whole course of its influence bears traces of the calm and majestic mind of Pitt. Still the advocates of

non-intervention may have something to say on the other side. It bound England closely with Holland, and thus was the final cause of the war with France in 1793. A careful study of the evidence shows us that the quarrel between France and England in that year, which led to a twenty-two years' struggle, was not caused by the opening of the Scheldt, by the conquest of Belgium, by the decree of November 19, or by the execution of Louis XVI., but by the threatening attitude of France towards Holland. The moment France menaced the independence of Holland the *casus fœderis* arose. Again, it led us to contemplate the so-called Russian armament of 1791, and the breach of faith with Prussia, of which public opinion in England compelled us then to be guilty, paved the way for the desertion of the coalition by Prussia in 1792, when she concluded the separate peace of Bâle. The peace of Bâle, whether or not it was an example to be imitated by other powers, laid Germany open to the attacks of Napoleon and kept the north of Europe quiet while its neighbours were being pillaged and revolutionised. Considerations such as these belong rather to the statesman than to the historian, and I must leave the discussion of them to those among my audience who are more competent to form a judgment upon them than the writer of this paper.