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THE CORRESPONDENCE OF AN ENGLISH DIPLOMATIC AGENT IN PARIS, 1669-1677.

BY MISS M. B. CURRAN.

Read May 16.

AMONGST the multifarious contents of the Old State Paper Office in Whitehall which were brought to light after the death of the famous Secretary of State of King Charles II., Sir Joseph Williamson, who was also keeper of the diplomatic archives, were certain bundles of despatches received from Mr. William Perwich, and dated at Paris between the years 1669 and 1677. These distinctive bundles, which at that time stood for the diplomatic correspondence between England and France during the most critical period of the foreign policy of the reign, have long since been broken up and distributed amongst the series of 'State Papers, France,' preserved in the Public Record Office.

Concerning the writer of these important despatches little can be gleaned from contemporary sources, whilst his official career is unrecorded in every modern work of biographical reference. The earliest mention of his name occurs in the State Papers of August, 1666, in a letter which contains the statement that certain London agents have forwarded letters for Sir Joseph Williamson and Mr. Perwich.¹

In the year 1668 we find him as a member of Lord Arlington's household in correspondence with Sir Joseph Williamson, who was at that time Under-Secretary of State.²

¹ *State Papers*, Domestic, Ch. II., August 6, 1666.

² *Ibid.* May 21, 1668.

From this correspondence we gather that Perwich was employed in an official capacity, but that he was not one of the trained body of clerks connected with the Secretary of State's office under the immediate supervision of Williamson himself.¹ Probably he was employed as private secretary to Lord Arlington, for in July, 1668, we find him writing to Williamson from Bath, acknowledging the receipt of his lordship's letters,² and again on July 22 of the same year he writes to thank Williamson on Lord Arlington's behalf for letters sent by Mr. Stanley.³

Apparently he accompanied Lord Montagu's mission to Paris in the early part of the year 1669 as Lord Arlington's special representative, for in a letter preserved in the same collection from Alfred Ellis to Williamson, dated April 21, 1670, the former suggests the transfer of all postal arrangements to Mr. Perwich, 'who understands our disputes much better,' rather than to Mr. Francis Vernon.⁴

Again, in August of the same year, Robert Yard forwards letters to Williamson which had arrived by the French post from Mr. Vernon and Mr. Perwich.⁵

Francis Vernon had been appointed Ralph Montagu's secretary for his embassy to Paris, but he appears to have given some dissatisfaction to the Government at home, and during the next few years Perwich made good use of the opportunity thus afforded him for the display of his talents as a diplomatist.

Whilst Sir Joseph Williamson was acting as one of the plenipotentiaries to the Congress at Cologne, Perwich maintained a close correspondence with him from Paris, and endeavoured to keep him well informed on all matters concerning the relations between England and France. In fact, he appears to have been the chief source of information to the English Government during the period of negotiations immediately preceding the second Dutch war of 1672, and during the two following years.

¹ *State Papers*, Domestic, Ch. II., May 21, 1668.

² *Ibid.* July 18, 1668.

³ *Ibid.* July 22, 1668.

⁴ *Ibid.* April 21, 1670.

⁵ *Ibid.* August 18, 1670.

It is clear that the officials at home placed great reliance on his opinions, and Robert Yard, in one of his letters from Whitehall to Sir Joseph Williamson, whilst the latter was in Cologne, remarks that there is no foreign news to communicate, as Mr. Perwich had taken another way to send Lord Arlington the advices of those parts (meaning France and Italy).¹

In the Montagu correspondence preserved at Beaulieu there are various allusions to William Perwich, all tending to show the value of his services to the Secretary of State.

Like many other public servants at this time, he seems to have found a difficulty in getting money from England, and on one occasion complains that for nine months he had not received any part of his official salary, 'his own small stock being long since devoured in letters and other extraordinary expenses, having for other subsistence been beholding to Sir Stephen Fox.'²

After the year 1674 the number of the despatches written in Perwich's distinctive handwriting gradually diminishes, until in the early part of the year 1677 they cease entirely.

The last mention we have of him seems to be in a letter dated February 6, 1677, in which Montagu asks Lord Arlington if he is really much interested in Mr. Perwich, who, he says, 'is at a stand, though he can seldom stand, for he is most eternally drunk. Therefore, pray, my lord, tell me in your next whether you are in jest or earnest concerned for him; if in earnest, I will do him all the service I can, though he can do me none.'³

The period covered by the diplomatic correspondence of this obscure agent extends very nearly from the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle to that of Nimwegen. The aim of the foreign policy of France during this eventful period is well

¹ *Letters of Sir J. Williamson*, i. 10.

² *State Papers*, France, December 30, 1673.

³ *Montagu-Arlington Correspondence*, February 6, 1677, p. 523.

marked by the various intrigues designed to break up the Triple Alliance, and to win England over to French interests ; to destroy the commercial supremacy of Holland, and to develop the trade of the French seaports. This policy was doubtless intended to mask Louis' main designs upon the Flemish possessions of the Spanish Crown, but that it was not without direct advantage to France is clear from the foreign correspondence of the period.

When Montagu went as English Ambassador to Paris in 1669, Charles Colbert, brother of Jean Colbert, was about to set out as French Ambassador to England, whose King was reported to have 'no greater desire than to make an alliance with France.'

The chief obstacle in the way of this alliance seems to have been Arlington, who was greatly distrusted in France, especially by Madame Henrietta of Orleans ; but, by the display of a little tact on the part of Montagu, the Earl was soon regarded with much favour at the French Court.¹

Colbert had evidently been ordered to do nothing unless England would abandon the Triple Alliance.² He arrived in London at the same time that Temple started for the Hague, with instructions to watch over the French designs on Holland, and to form, if possible, a powerful league against Louis by enlisting the support of the Swiss Cantons and the Princes of Brandenburg, Luxembourg, and Saxe.³ It is clear that Temple must have worked unsuccessfully to this end, for Perwich informs Sir Joseph Williamson that 'the Swisses have been lately bought off for their intention of creeping into the Triple Alliance.'⁴

In spite of the numerous audiences which Colbert had of the King, he could get nothing but evasive or negative answers. Montagu indeed appears to have heard a very unfavourable report of Colbert's influence at the English

¹ *Montagu-Arlington Letters*, p. 435.

² Mignet, *Négociations relatives sur la Succession d'Espagne sous Louis XIV.*, iii. 23.

³ *Ibid.* iii. 39.

⁴ *State Papers*, For., May 1, 1669.

Court, for in a letter to Arlington, dated July 3, 1669, he writes that the King of France told Madam that 'he was afraid Mr. Colbert would not do much good in England, for he heard that the King and everybody laugh at him.'¹

At this time Louis XIV. was evidently much more anxious than Charles II. for an alliance, and Montagu recommended Arlington to try to bring about an understanding, as 'there is no kind of terms that the King may not have from the French.'² The French, according to Perwich, 'apprehended much that Van Beuninghen is to go Ambassador for England, whom they have, as they say, great reason to hate,'³ and this, no doubt, increased their anxiety to complete the alliance at the earliest possible date. Then, again, they felt that the alliance must be completed before Parliament met in England, otherwise their negotiations would be of no avail.

Meanwhile Louis was leaving 'no stone unturned whereby he could with convenience increase his strength, for all the workmen and labourers that were then employed in fortifying the new conquest places—that is, those taken in Flanders in the campaign of 1667—had the offer to engage themselves in the King's service in case any war should happen with Spain or the young King die, that they shall then continue as soldiers under the same pay they now are.'⁴

One thing which rankled in the minds of the English was the treaty of 1667 made by Colbert, by which the duties on manufactured goods brought into France had been doubled, and in consequence had risen to nearly 80 per cent. of the value of the goods.⁵

¹ *Montagu-Arlington Letters*, p. 428.

² *Ibid.* p. 423.

³ *State Papers*, For., April 17, 1669.

⁴ *Ibid.* May 11, 1699.

⁵ Baschet, *Transcripts, Ambassador Colbert to Monsieur Colbert*, September 12, 1669: 'On insiste fort ici sur deux points, sur lesquels je ne crois pas que vous ayez dessein de leur donner satisfaction. Le premier est que les tarifs des entrées et sorties soient remis de port et d'autres au même état qu'ils étaient en 1664, disant, comme il est vrai, que par celui de 1667 vous avez rehaussé les droits d'entrée sur les manufactures d'Angleterre au double de ce qu'ils étaient, et qui vont à présent à près de 80 pour cent de la valeur desdites marchandises.'

This tax of 1667 was in reality the germ of the war of 1672.¹ It struck a heavy blow against Dutch trade, and no sooner had it been published than Van Beuninghen wrote to De Witt that they must defend their cloths and many other merchandise in Holland. England, on her part, retaliated by a tax on the importation of wine. Pomponne, the Ambassador of the Hague, and Colbert had many meetings to discuss the matter, and Pomponne advised Colbert that the Dutch spoke of augmenting their taxes on wine; Colbert, however, pretended to ignore these threats. But England meant to retaliate by more than a tax on wine, for in June 1669 it came to the ears of the French—‘with much dissatisfaction’—that certain corn merchants in Picardy having been given a free liberty to transport corn into foreign countries had sent several ships to England ‘to vent their granaries,’ but had found a prohibition against any such importation. This caused the French to imagine that ‘the commerce with England would not be so current as was expected.’²

Colbert carried out his protective system by forbidding ‘the vent of foreign drapery, for he prohibited all drapers in Paris to buy any but the manufacture of France under pain of confiscation.’³ Perwich, in the same letter, informs Williamson that ‘Mr. Colbert does turn and wind in this matter of Trade, and makes no difficulty to do anything though manifestly against all treaties to break the neck of our English sale of drapery here; the occasion for cloth being extraordinary in this time of mourning.’ The mourning was due to the Queen-mother’s death in September 1669, in connection with which it may be remarked that Montagu furnished the English Government a curious account of the disposition of her estates.⁴

¹ Clément, *Histoire de Colbert*, p. 296. For the curious and instructive debates on this subject in the Council of Trade see the Domestic State Papers of the period.

² *State Papers*, For., June 26, 1669.

³ *Ibid.* September 24, 1669.

⁴ *Montagu-Arlington Correspondence*, September 11, 1669, pp. 438, 439.

However in November 1669 Perwich reports that France was beginning to despair of ever doing any good in England—that is, ‘of drawing England off the League’—because they imagine that Parliament will ‘take notice of the great abuses done the English in their trade with France, and consequently desire the King to do something reciprocally in that side.’¹

Still Louis was making great preparations for war, his object being to raise a considerable army before spring; and so anxious was he to provide an efficient navy, that ‘200 young gentlemen volunteers were maintained on board his Admiral and Vice-Admiral’s ships so that they might learn the art of navigation, to render them capable of succeeding in the commands of officers who shall happen to fail; and besides this, no sooner one ship is clear but another is put on the stocks, and all the seamen they can find are engaged in the King’s service.’²

In November of 1669 the Triple Alliance was trembling in the balance. Spain had promised to pay Sweden large sums of money to maintain Swedish troops in Germany and to prevent the Low Countries from being attacked, and as part of this money had fallen due and Spain had refused to pay it, Sweden threatened to withdraw from the League.³

The Dutch were beginning to be suspicious of England, and Temple was ordered to reassure them at the same time that Colbert was persuaded that it was under great stress of circumstances that the conditions of the Alliance were fulfilled.⁴

Early in 1670 Louis began his preparations for the conquest of the Low Countries by assuring the Queen of Spain that she need not be alarmed at his preparations—the same message (Perwich remarks) that he had sent two years ago when he invaded Flanders.’⁵

¹ *State Papers*, For., November 2, 1669. Paris.

² *Ibid.*, December 28, 1669.

³ Mignet, iii. 110.

⁴ *Ibid.* iii. 112.

⁵ *State Papers*, For., February 1, 1670.

The Dutch at this moment were negotiating with the Queen Regent of Spain to help her with troops and money to defend Flanders in case of war, which, according to Perwich, was 'supposed to be a "bravoure"' to balance an instruction the Archbishop of Toulouse carries with him to propose a marriage between the King of Spain and little Madam of France, a league against Holland, and a remission of all pretensions to a portion, upon condition that in default of heir male the Dauphin shall inherit Flanders.¹

In May of 1670 Madam Henrietta visited England, and the secret Treaty of Dover was signed on the 1st of June by Arlington, Arundel, Clifford, and Bellings for England, and Colbert for France.²

It is curious to notice in connection with the rumoured poisoning of this Princess on her arrival in Paris that her reception on her return had been as 'cold and uncivil as can well be imagined.'³

Buckingham went over to France in August,⁴ and the reception which was given him, together with a resolution taken to send about fifteen thousand men from the camp to rendezvous at Péronne, under the command of Marshal Créquy, confirmed the belief in France 'that the league was broken.'⁵ His mission was apparently concerned with an arrangement with Louis on behalf of the Protestants, and with measures to obtain some redress for the ill-usage which our merchants suffered in the sale of woollen cloths.

Colbert was probably anxious to begin war in the spring of 1671,⁶ and he doubtless persuaded the King of England that it would be better to be fully launched on the war before he should declare himself a Catholic. To this Charles readily agreed, we may well believe, if the state of his finances would allow, which he somewhat feared; but this may have been another 'ruse' on his part to get a larger subsidy from

¹ *State Papers*, For., February 8, 1670.

² Mignet, iii. 199.

³ *Montagu-Arlington Correspondence*, June 22, 1670, p. 475.

⁴ Mignet, iii. 221.

⁵ *State Papers*, For., August 23, 1670.

⁶ Mignet, iii. 224.

France. Meanwhile Van Beuninghen, the ambassador from The Hague, could get nothing out of England ;¹ the Emperor had not been admitted into the alliance as had been proposed, and to put the finishing touch to the suspicions of the Dutch, Temple was recalled to England in October 1670, under promise to return almost immediately, but as soon as he arrived in London he saw that there was no possibility of his returning.²

The Dutch, therefore, began to raise an army with the help of the Emperor, the Elector of Mayence, and the Duke of Lorraine.³ Louis retaliated by marching his troops into Lorraine, and he commissioned Créqui to take possession of that part of the country.

The Lorrainers, Perwich reports, were ordered to show fidelity to France, 800 of the militia being condemned to the galleys for disobeying the declaration. But those who did join the French army soon deserted the service — 'their pay being but a penny a day and yet vigorously used.'⁴

In spite of the near approach of war the commercial negotiations between England and France had not been concluded, for in October 1670 Perwich informs Lord Arlington that 'a prohibition had been posted up in only some few particular places forbidding the merchants to buy or vend English silk stockings.' He remarks that 'the abuses of that kind are great and general in all the English trade with this kingdom, and nothing but a reciprocal proceeding will obtain redress, they being solely bent upon the advancing the manufactures of France to the destruction of all foreign trade.'⁵

The French even went so far as to smuggle in the wool which they were able to obtain from the Walloons at Canterbury, 'who comb many hundredweights in a week, and the way the French have to transport it is their running aground with their little vessels in the night time when the country

¹ Mignet, ii. 225.

² *Ibid.* iii. 228.

³ *Ibid.* iii. 230.

⁴ *State Papers*, For., October 1, 1670.

⁵ *Ibid.*

people stuff them with wool and they get off again by the tide before morning and so escape being taken notice of. And for encouragement of its importation the customs on it are very small, as 30 *sous* per cent., whereas those on coals at 24 *livres* because they desire not to have them brought hither.' He then goes on to say, 'There must be some remedy applied to this growing mischief or we must expect that the neck of our manufacturers' commerce will be broken, whatever freedom may be granted us by treaties.'¹

As Louis was apparently prepared for war in May 1671, Buckingham was anxious to conclude the second treaty,² giving out that the Dutch and Spanish had offered large sums to England if she would change her policy. Louis, however, had encountered greater difficulties than he had expected in his negotiations with the Princes of Germany, and as he did not wish to engage in a war on land without their help, nor to commence naval operations without being able to overwhelm at the same time his enemy on land, he conceived the idea of putting off the war for another year.³ Charles, on the other hand, was ready to begin war, especially as his demands for money from Parliament had been made on that foundation, and the Commons, knowing that France and Holland were making preparations, for once agreed to give Charles what he asked.⁴

The French armies were increasing daily, and vast provisions of corn and cattle had been collected. Louis had also sent word to the Elector of Trèves that he intended to lodge some troops in his country, 'which much alarmed that Prince;' and to increase his coffers he intended 'to squeeze his Parliament into making some arrests that would bring him in millions.'⁵

By means of this arrangement with the English King Louis was able to postpone the declaration of war for a more convenient moment, and the second treaty was signed

¹ *State Papers*, For., October 11, 1670.

² Mignet, iii. 230.

³ *Ibid.* iii. 232.

⁴ *Ibid.* iii. 240.

⁵ *State Papers*, For., October 16 and November 29, 1670.

December 31, 1670, no mention being made of Charles's intention to declare himself a Roman Catholic.¹

After securing the alliance of England, Louis turned his attention towards the Princes of Germany.² As his intention was to attack the United Provinces by the Meuse or the Rhine, their co-operation or neutrality was necessary to the success of the attack. Sweden, too, must be drawn off from the Triple Alliance, and to effect this Louis offered 480,000 *écus* in place of the 200,000 *écus* which Spain owed.

But Louis' offer came too late ; Spain had paid the portion of the subsidy then due, and Sweden had no longer any inducement to co-operate with France.³

In January 1671, everybody in France (Perwich tells his Government) except the King and the Ministry was 'mad for war ;'⁴ the soldiers even went so far as to calculate the number of days that such and such cities in Holland could hold out and the minute they ought to 'resign' or be taken ; and many of the reformed officers maintained in Picardy by half-pay were in such impatience for a war that they had quitted their garrisons and had gone over to the Dutch in hopes of finding employment.⁵

The nobility especially were almost ruining themselves with their vast preparations, and 'if they could only get the whip-hand of the Ministers there would certainly be war, but as long as they are employed in all things that concern the military state and retrench the allowances of all governors and commanders of towns of half their former privileges there is little likelihood that the military faction can prevail unless there be a war, and this is the reason that the Ministers are most against it.' Therefore they find out such a 'petit' excursion as that of Lorraine to divert the King.⁶

Besides troops Louis wanted money, and to get this he demanded 'an advance of eight millions of his farmers which many think they are not able to furnish him with, notwith-

¹ Mignet, iii. 241.

² *Ibid.* iii. 270.

³ *Ibid.* iii. 284.

⁴ *State Papers*, For., January 4, 1671.

⁵ *Ibid.* January 18, 1671.

⁶ *Ibid.* April 11, 1671.

standing which he is now working for his service a whole set of gold plate besides great massive silver table and stands.'¹

Meanwhile Charles was beginning to display a decided partiality for France, and so long as De Witt refused to restore to the Prince of Orange the office of Captain-General, which his ancestors had exercised, there was no chance of help from England.² The United Provinces made a final attempt to obtain a closer alliance with England in March 1671. But Charles wanted to know what subsidies they would be willing to give if he helped in a war solely to the interest of the Dutch.³ The Dutch Ambassador, Monsieur Boreel, answered that it was their intention to throw themselves 'entre les bras de la France'⁴ if they found the English King unwilling to tighten the alliance. They hoped in this way to precipitate matters, but Charles knew the intentions of France too well to be moved by this bravado.

Repulsed on the part of England, the States-General turned towards the Empire.⁵ They negotiated private treaties with the Elector of Brandenburg and the Duke of Luxembourg, and tried to form a league in Germany in which these two Princes, the Emperor, the Electors of Mayence and Trèves would join with the object of defending Holland and the Spanish Low Countries. They announced their intention of raising about 70,000 men, of which 7,000 would be cavalry; of equipping thirty-six vessels of war, which would be put to sea on May 15 under the command of Ruyter, and thirty-six more for August⁶—a ruinous proceeding for a country whose commerce was in a state of collapse; but they hoped by these preparations to induce Spain to join them.

Towards the end of the year, Charles, in spite of having received considerable sums from Parliament in the last session, was, as usual, hard pressed for money, and applied to Louis to discharge him from the obligation of raising the

¹ *State Papers*, For., July 25, 1671.

² *Ibid.* iii. 633.

³ *Ibid.* iii. 633.

⁴ Mignet, iii. 628, 629.

⁵ *Ibid.* iii. 633.

⁶ *Ibid.* iii. 633.

6,000 men whom he had engaged to send on the Continent.¹ He proposed to employ the money for the better equipment of his fleet, and offered to recruit in England 8,000 or 10,000 men. Louis agreed to be content with an army of 2,400 Englishmen, to be put under the command of the Duke of Monmouth, if Charles would prorogue the meeting of Parliament until October 1672.

But Louis had a private reason for acquiescing with so little difficulty. The French believed that Charles was under an engagement to give Buckingham the command of those forces, and they looked upon him 'as a man ill-affected to monarchy, and that consequently he was likely to play a thousand tricks when once he had such an authority in his hands,' and they knew also that he and his friends desired to keep well with the Presbyterian and fanatic party, who were never favourable to a French alliance, and could never be persuaded that they would join unanimously for the destruction of Holland which is a Commonwealth, and such as they believe they wish in England, 'if they had the power to compass it.'²

Buckingham was so much incensed at being deprived of the command that he declared to Louis it was merely 'a malicious project' of Arlington and Montagu to deprive him of 'so honourable a post,' and to Colbert that he regretted having signed the treaty of alliance.³

His anger indeed was so great that he refused at first to see the King or to take any part in the Cabinet Councils in which the execution of the treaty of December 1670 was discussed.⁴ Charles, however, succeeded in appeasing him, and the threat to deprive him of his offices in case any division should arise which might harm the execution of the treaty through his refusing to take part in it brought him to his senses.

At the same time, Charles II. decided to send Sir George Downing over to Holland—the spokesman of the jealous

¹ Mignet, iii. 653, 654.

² *Montagu-Arlington Correspondence*, p. 502.

³ *Ibid.* December 15, 1671, p. 507.

⁴ Mignet, iii. 654, 655.

London merchants, and the man who had brought about the rupture with the United Provinces in 1665—as the most likely person to bring about another quarrel.

The States-General thereupon sent over an ambassador to Louis to desire his Majesty to declare his intentions and ‘to offer him satisfaction in whatever complaints his Majesty hath made against them, and particularly naming the late differences in point of commerce.’¹

Even up to this moment the Dutch were not aware of the treaty with France, for Perwich mentions that ‘the Dutch Ambassador hath written out of England that the King of England had satisfied him as to his adhering to the League with other circumstances of friendship which gives occasion of much discourse here.’²

This interview, if granted, was unfavourable to the Dutch. It was evident that war was imminent and that the United Provinces must look for allies.³ They made overtures to Spain, and a treaty was concluded at Madrid by which Spain agreed to help the Dutch if necessary, and the Dutch agreed to help Spain. Louis then set to work to prevent the ratification of this treaty, and we hear from Perwich that ‘an express was sent into Spain with orders to the Marquis de Villards to inform the Queen of Spain of the complaints the King hath against the Dutch, and to demand a positive answer whether she be inclined to enter in a league with them,’ in which case the French Ambassador is ordered to declare that ‘his most Christian Majesty (meaning Louis) does withdraw his promise wherein he engaged himself not to act against the monarchy of Spain during the King’s minority.’⁴

Charles II. sent the Earl of Sunderland as his ambassador to Madrid to act in concurrence with the French Envoy.⁵ Louis proposed to share his conquests if the Spanish Queen would only agree to an offensive alliance against Holland, and besides this he arranged not to finish the war until Holland had

¹ *State Papers*, France, December 24, 1671.

² *Ibid.* December 19, 1671.

⁴ *State Papers*, For., December 26, 1671.

³ Mignet, iii. 663.

⁵ Mignet, iii. 671.

restored to Spain the places which formerly belonged to her, and also to exact the most advantageous terms for the Spanish Low Countries.¹ He even asked the Emperor to use his influence with his sister (the Queen of Spain). The Emperor, however, could not decide which course to take. Several of the German Princes complained that he made no attempt to make any preparations to help the Dutch,² and he began to regret having signed the treaty of neutrality with France. On the other hand, he did not wish that Spain should drag him into a war which had no direct interest for the House of Austria.

After several audiences, the Chevalier de Grémonville was able to inform Louis 'que l'Empereur n'omettrait rien de ce qui était nécessaire au maintien du dernier traité.'³

Spain had decided to make preparations on as vast a scale as the finances of the kingdom would allow, and it was reported that the Dutch, 'to engage the Spaniards more vigorously in their party, had promised not to treat with France unless it rendered up all the late conquests of 1667 to the Spaniards,' an engagement which Perwich imagines to have been 'rather a bravado than a probable matter.'⁴

Spain intended to embark 4,000 men for Flanders in March 1671, and in France it was believed that the King's journey into Flanders would not 'end at the Rendezvous, that when he shall be there the manifesto may be published, and that Julier (*sic*) may be the first thing entered into.'⁵ A good deal of information is given in this correspondence about the levying of troops in France. Perwich informs us that the King himself proposed to go in person at the head of an army on the frontiers of Luxembourg; Marshal de Créqui was to command an army of 40,000 men in Flanders 'to have an eye' on the Spaniards, and the Prince of Condé was to command the army towards Germany with his son the Duke d'Enghien under him, and with him the two Marshals

¹ Mignet, iii. 672.

² *Ibid.* iii. 675.

³ *Ibid.* iii. 677.

⁴ *State Papers*, France, February 6, 1672.

⁵ *Ibid.* January 2, 1672.

of France, of which Créqui shall be one.'¹ Thirteen men of-war were to go into the Mediterranean, and 'the Count d'Estrées was to command a fleet of thirty-four ships in the Ocean besides others that were designed to both the Indies, he being mightily pleased with the honour of his employment.'²

A suggestion was put forward that the French ships should take English commissions and English colours, on the precedent that an English squadron had formerly done the like under France; but Louis objected, as 'he never could suffer his captains to take commissions but from himself, and the English commissions were given the Captains from the Admiral.'³

Meanwhile the States-General had met in Paris, but Louis did not deign to be present. He was, however, assured of compliance to all his edicts for the raising of money.⁴ These edicts suppressed the offices of all the secretaries of the King, his Majesty reserving the re-establishment of 200 of these officials out of the whole body, which, according to Perwich, 'is to say in English, every one shall pay considerably to be of the number.'⁵ The secretaries tried to bring about the revocation of this edict by offering 60,000 pistoles to Mr. Colbert, but they were informed that they would have to offer 20,000 more before they could prevail.⁶ Another edict laid a tax of 'twenty *sous* a mark for all silver plate the goldsmiths shall hereafter sell and thirty *sous* the ounce on the gold.' A third made the offices of procurator, notary, and sergeant hereditary upon payment of a set sum.

Early in 1672 a dispute seems to have arisen about the position of Marshal de Turenne. Louis had given him general command of the army, but Marshals Belfonds and Humières refused to receive orders from him, on the plea that it was an

¹ *State Papers*, France, February 27, 1672. ² *Ibid.* February 6, 1672.

³ *Montagu-Arlington Correspondence*, p. 515. The statement as to the practice of the English Adm'rality is correct, and is an interesting confirmation of official tradition.

⁴ *State Papers*, France, April 6, 1672.

⁵ *Ibid.* April 9, 1672.

⁶ *Ibid.* April 9, 1672.

innovation on the great authority of Marshals of France, 'since they never were commanded by other than a "connétable," which charge being suppressed it would derogate much from their privileges to obey one of their brethren.'¹ Their answer much offended the King, and they were ordered either to agree or to retire from Court.

War was declared between England and Holland March 28, 1672,² and between France and Holland April 6 of the same year, and Louis immediately set out for St. Germain to begin his campaign. Then followed the famous campaign of 1672, in which Louis took with ease the Dutch fortresses and succeeded in crossing the Rhine. By the middle of the year he found his army seriously exhausted, though the Government at home had been busy throughout endeavouring to raise troops to fill up the gaps.

On August 1 of the same year Louis returned to St. Germain, 'being somewhat sensible of his fatigue,'³ and anxious to see about new supplies both of money and troops. Vast sums were raised by a declaration that no process at law or other acts in writing should be brought into any court of justice 'without paying for the prepared parchment and paper with the flower "de luce" mark.'⁴ This tax was rejected in the provincial Parliaments, and a suggestion was put forward that it should be extended to whatever paper should be used, not only on proceedings at law. Then a great imposition was laid on the periwig-makers, but 'a body of 400 of their wives went to demand pity from Colbert.'⁵

Indeed, everything conceivable was taxed—to the degree that 'a house built without the limits (of which there were some thousands) that cost 800 crowns, paid down 400 immediately to the King.'⁶ Colbert having asked the custom farmers for an advance of fourteen millions, they complained that because of the deadness of trade they could not advance such a large sum, but that they would endeavour by their

¹ *State Papers*, France, April 23, 1672.

³ *State Papers*, France, August 6, 1672.

⁵ *Ibid.* August 30, 1673.

² Mignet, iii. 703.

⁴ *Ibid.* August 5, 1673.

⁶ *Ibid.* September 20, 1673.

credit to raise it, giving their farm as security for the payment by degrees.¹

In December 1673 the King in his Grand Council for the better establishing the foreign trade suppressed the duty of 30 per cent. set upon all merchandise and foreign manufactures imported into France, 'so that for the future they shall pay nothing.' Another order was put on foot 'giving permission to Dutch merchants and to Spaniards to come into the French ports with passeports and there to buy wines or other merchandise upon condition that they pay a new tax of a crown per tun besides the ancient one of fifty *sous*.'² It was not thought, however, that much profit would be got out of the latter, because the Dutch and Flemings had already forbidden the consumption of French commodities, especially wines and brandies.

In the meantime, in England, Charles II. found his position most grave. The war had been preceded by a set of acts which caused intense indignation—the stoppage of the Exchequer in January 1672; an urgent Declaration of Indulgence suspending all penal laws against Nonconformists, and the failure of Admiral Holmes to seize a rich Dutch fleet sailing up the Channel, in order to procure funds for the war.

In the spring of 1673 the mediation of Sweden was accepted by the belligerents, and a congress met at Cologne, to which the Earl of Sunderland, Sir Leoline Jenkins, and Sir Joseph Williamson were appointed as representatives from England.³

The rapid success of the French had caused much uneasiness in Sweden,⁴ where it was considered that the ruin of the United Provinces would leave the English sole masters of the sea, and it was on this account that Swedish mediation was offered.

France and England appeared to accept the offer. The Dutch, on their part, alarmed by the success of the French

¹ *State Papers*, France, October 7, 1673.

² *Ibid.* December 24, 1673.

³ Mignet, iv. 141.

⁴ *Ibid.* iv. 139.

in their winter campaign, and also by the treaty made between Louis and the Elector of Brandenburg, asked for a suspension of arms, which was refused to them.¹

Then the allied monarchs stated their demands, but the Dutch deputies appear to have been so much disconcerted at their nature that they declined a conference,² and eventually decided to continue the war.³ Attempts were however made in vain to draw off England from the French alliance and to conclude a private treaty, but Charles replied 'qu'il ne ferait jamais de paix que d'accord avec le roi de France.'⁴

However, in February of 1674 peace was concluded between England and Holland, which 'did not much astonish the people in Paris, in that it hath been expected long since as a matter that would come to pass.'⁵ In fact, rumours of a peace had reached the French Court some days before it was actually concluded, and had caused much discourse concerning the English, for Perwich⁶ informs Lord Arlington that 'all the people are possessed to our prejudice, insomuch that the Count de Grammont said yesterday to Colonel Talbot that were he at Court and heard their discourse as to the English he would immediately take post and leave the nation.'⁷

From this point the correspondence of Perwich with his Government falls off considerably, and the remaining letters are chiefly concerned with the investigation of the curious conspiracy of the Chevalier de Rohan in the year 1674, a political plot in which Sir Joseph Williamson appears to have taken a special interest, and concerning which Perwich was charged to obtain all the information possible. The details which he communicated to Williamson were obtained from the best possible source—from one who assisted at the trial—though the matter was supposed to have been kept a profound secret.⁸

¹ Mignet, iv. 141.

² *State Papers*, France, July 15, 1673.

³ Mignet, iv. 147.

⁴ *Ibid.* iv. 153.

⁵ *State Papers*, France, February 14, 1674.

⁶ *Ibid.* February 20, 1674.

⁷ *Ibid.* February 14, 1674.

⁸ It may be noted in this connection that French historical students have been much interested of late years in this romantic episode, and the result of

Four persons were concerned in this plot—Louis de Rohan, generally known as the Chevalier de Rohan, the son of an illustrious house, who had incurred the hatred of Louis XIV. (it was said for insulting him at a card party); La Tréaumont, a retired officer; the Marquise de Villars, and Van den Enden, a Dutch schoolmaster who for some years had been keeping a school in Paris. With the help of these confederates, De Rohan wrote an anonymous letter to the Count de Monterey, at that time the Spanish Governor at Brussels, intimating that Normandy was very much disposed to a revolt, and that if he (the Count de Monterey) would send a fleet with 6,000 men and arms for 20,000, together with necessaries for sieges, and two million livres, also an assurance of 30,000 and 20,000 crowns as pensions for the two chief conspirators, 'there was a great man' (meaning Rohan) 'who would put Quilleboëuf and another maritime town into his possession, and with the succour, expected to master all Normandy,' and by this means an army might come straight to Versailles 'without passing a river and bridge.'

The conspirators were executed in Paris, and Perwich gives a very interesting account of the scene.¹

exhaustive researches amongst the State Papers and criminal archives in Paris was published in the *Revue hebdomadaire*, Dec. 1898 to Jan. 1899. Curiously enough, the subject was being investigated at exactly the same time in this country, and a long article appeared in the *Athenæum*, Feb. 4, 1899, based upon Perwich's narrative and the reports of his agents. From these published narratives it would appear that the information supplied by Perwich's despatches is better than that which is to be found in the French archives.

¹ *State Papers*, France, January 23, 1675.