

CHAPTER I

Pitt's Imperial War

THE fight for Canada is the most justly famous episode of the Seven Years War, which, in its turn, is the central phase of the Great Imperial War between France and England, that lasted from 1688 to 1815, and decided the oversea dominion of the World.

At the beginning of this mighty struggle France was by far the strongest country in Europe, and Louis XIV was at the zenith of his highly centralized power. Richelieu had consolidated the Kingdom for him; and Colbert, Louvois and others had carried on the national organization towards the same end; until at last the King of France had become the virtual Commander-in-Chief of his twenty million subjects. He was the centre of France, and France was the centre of Europe. And the relative strength of his position was greatly increased by the comparative weakness of all his neighbours. Spain was already in decay, Germany worn out by the Thirty Years War and disunited as usual, Austria still threatened by the Turks, Sweden exhausted by the efforts she had made a generation before, Holland on the verge of decline, Portugal of no further importance, Russia not yet entered into the