

mitted aggressions on the infant colonies founded by the duke of York, and he prevailed on his brother to allow him to do battle with them in person on the seas. His skill and valour achieved the most signal triumph over the fleets of Holland that had ever been attained by those of England. This memorable battle was fought on the 3rd of June, 1665, off the coast of Suffolk, and the brilliant success was considered mainly attributable to the adoption of the naval signals and the line of battle at sea, which had been discovered by the naval genius of the duke of York. Eighteen great ships of the Dutch were taken or burnt, and but one ship lost of the British navy. The chief slaughter was on board the duke's own ship, especially around his person, for the friends he loved best were slain by his side, and he was covered with their blood. These were lord Muskerry and Charles Berkeley, (lord Falmouth). They were well avenged, for James instantly ordered all his guns to fire into the hull of Opdam the Dutch admiral's ship: at the third shot she blew up. The parliament voted James a present of 60,000*l.*, as a testimonial for the great service he had performed. The maternal anxiety of the queen-mother, Henrietta, on account of the peril to which the duke of York had been exposed in the late fight, wrung from Charles a promise that he should not go into battle again. The nation united in this feeling, for James was then the idol of his country. If his earnest representations had been heeded by Charles and his short-sighted ministers, the insult that was offered to England by the Dutch aggression on the ships at Chatham in the year 1667, would never have taken place.¹

The events of the next five years cast a blight over the rest of James's life. All his children died but the two daughters who

¹ The poverty of the crown led to paltry expedients in the way of retrenchments. The large ships were laid up. James vehemently protested against the measure, as an abandonment of the sovereignty of the seas; and he predicted that the Dutch would insult the coast, and plunder the maritime counties. His objections were over-ruled. The distresses caused by the plague and the fire prevented the merchants from lending money to the government to pay the seamen's wages; the crown was paralysed by a debt of 900,000*l.*, and for want of natural supplies, the measure deprecated by the heir-presumptive of the crown was adopted. The result left a stain on the annals of Charles II.'s government.