

CHAPTER XXI

THE approach of the winter of 1691 gave time to the princes of the Christian league to form new plans and recover their strength. The King of Poland was still hesitating between Leopold and Louis XIV. His reputation in Europe was the greatest of all the European sovereigns, but his power was much less and, therefore, he endeavored to keep terms with them both. His inclinations were for France, but his interest again determined him to side with the House of Austria. France indeed did not fail to make him tempting offers, but the House of Austria, by being so near his dominions, was in a condition to fulfill the promises it gave whenever it was disposed to keep its word, but there remained the annoying fact that it never kept its word with the King, and yet, in spite of all this, by some fatality which is not understood, the King of Poland was still disposed toward Leopold. The King, at this very juncture, had a family concern to settle with that court. He wanted to marry his son, Prince James; and there was no fit match for him in Poland, since that kingdom had lost its richest heiress. France, indeed, might have offered a princess of the blood,